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* Possibility of Hung Parliament Considered

* Problem Predicted

91AS0966A Madras THE HINDU in English 17 May 91 p 9

[Text] A FRONTLINE-MRAS opinion poll forecasts that the tenth general election will produce a hung Parliament, that is a Lok Sabha in which no party or formation will have a majority.

The Congress(I) will emerge as the No. 1 party, with an estimated tally of 224, which means a range of 220-230. The BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] and Shiv Sena are expected to bag 140 seats, which means a range of 135-145. The National Front-Left combination will emerge No. 3, with a predicted tally of 115 seats, which suggests a range of 110-120. These are the major forecasts made by the FRONTLINE-MRAS all-India public opinion poll completed on 8 May.

MRAS (South) interviewed for FRONTLINE magazine 10,730 adults spread across 35 Lok Sabha constituencies in 13 major States. The forecasts are for 510 seats for which elections are due to be held in May 91 and do not cover Punjab or Assam. The poll was spread over four days, 5 to 8 May.

The poll reveals that in the extended Hindi belt, there is an "upsurge of Hindutva as an electoral commodity"—which means a surge for the BJP in that region, and above all in Uttar Pradesh. One of the findings is that in the extended Hindi belt, "Mandir is a far more potent electoral issue than Mandal."

The FRONTLINE feature makes the point that since the forecasts reflect the position as on 8 May, with two weeks to go in the campaign, the following should be borne in mind. Press reports suggesting a BJP upswing in Madhya Pradesh and an advance for the Janata Dal in Uttar Pradesh with Mr. V.P. Singh's strong campaigning may reflect political developments that may change the tallies somewhat. However, these developments are unlikely to alter the rankings.

In recording voting intentions, the FRONTLINE-MRAS poll found that 12 percent of the respondents said they were undecided or did not intend to vote. After apportioning these votes suitably, the Congress(I) and its allies are estimated to get 40 percent of the votes of the respondents, the BJP and Shiv Sena 31 percent, the National Front-Left combination 25 percent, and others 4 percent.

Asked to indicate their choice of Prime Minister, 37 percent of the respondents in the poll backed Mr. Rajiv Gandhi followed by 22 percent support for Mr. V.P. Singh, 21 percent for Mr. L.K. Advani and only 6 percent for Mr. Chandra Shekhar, whose party has been completely marginalised in the contest.

The poll highlights the point that the emergence of the Congress(I) as a party "not far away from a majority" and the arrival of "the beyond-the-pale BJP as No. 2" will mean that "the political compulsions for some kind of realignment—or more dangerously, horse trading—will be quite strong.

* Parties' Stand Noted

91AS0966B Madras THE HINDU in English 17 May 91 p 1

[Article by K.K. Katyal; boldface words as published]

[Text] New Delhi, 16 May—The word "hung" has suddenly got wide currency; it is used to describe the unclear verdict which the forthcoming Lok Sabha poll is generally perceived to be heading to. This prediction of pollsters (with one or two exceptions) is shared by those who have closely followed the election campaign in different—and representative—parts of the country.

In this situation, it is natural for the people's attention to turn to the type of government they will get, or to the feasibility or otherwise of coalitional arrangements—something which the country, long used to single-party dominance, has not experienced so far. The triangular set-up headed by Mr. V.P. Singh and the Chandra Shekhar Government, propped up by the Congress(I) constituted a class by themselves.

Who could coalesce with whom is not a case of counting eggs before they are hatched, but of advance mental adjustments to the likely post-poll scenarios. The exercise is worth undertaking, even if there is a sudden surge of support for a single party majority—as a reaction to the uncertainties of a hung Lok Sabha.

Question of acceptability: The three main forces are the Congress(I), the National Front-Left alliance and the BJP [Bharatiya janata Party] and the question, thus, boils down to which of these would be prepared to work with which other party. Then there is the Prime Minister, Mr. Chandra Shekhar's group, the Samajwadi Janata Party [SJP], but opinions differ on whether it will be relevant to the new dispensation after the election.

The coalition issue acquires significance because of the known aversion of the President, Mr. R. Venkataraman to the "outside support" experiment. If no party gets a majority, there will be no escape from a coalition, unless, of course splits and defections lead to new permutations.

In the election debate conducted by EYEWITNESS, HTV's video magazine, the question was posed to the representatives of the four parties Mr. Shiv Shanker, Congress(I), Dr. Murali Manohar Joshi, BJP, Mr. Ajit Singh, Janata Dal and Dr. Subramaniam Swamy, SJP. Their initial hesitation to talk about a coalition was understandable in view of the image of confidence (about their capacity to get majority) projected by them. Later, they opened up slightly.

Mr. Ajit Singh was emphatic that "in the event of a hung Parliament, I can tell you that one party we will not ally with and that's BJP." But who was his preference? "That depends.

The same was the thrust of Dr. Swamy's reply—"On the supposition that there is a hung Parliament, the only thing I could say is now would be that my party will move heaven and earth to see that the BJP is not part of any governmental structure."

Even Left is alright: Mr. Shiv Shanker was somewhat specific "assuming for a moment that it again turns out to be hung Parliament, then we would not mind opening up ourselves, with the Left parties for an alliance." But Mr. Ajit Singh had doubts whether his party's ally, the Left, would accept any such offer by the Congress(I). Mr. Shiv shanker ruled out any alliance with the Janata Dal also. Dr. Joshi did not foresee a hung Parliament and, therefore, ruled out the possibility of aligning with any party.

During discussion on the issue of secularism, Ayodhya the demand for construction of a temple at the site of the mosque and criticism of the BJP on that score, Dr. Joshi sought to turn the tables on the Congress(I) for mixing religion and politics. He was referring to the Congress(I)'s declaration in the election manifesto for Mizoram that the "text-books would be written in accordance with the Bible" if it is voted to power in the State.

Mr. Shiv Shanker sought to explain it away as a case of mistranslation—"so far as Mizoram is concerned, that translation part was not known to the AICC(I) [All India Congress Committee] and if you kindly look up our original draft, there is nothing of that type where we have ever said Bible of Christianity in any form."

Was any action taken against those responsible for it? "We did, we asked the person concerned who have written that to be suspended...".

* Election Scene: Glamour Replacing 'Commitment'

91AS0599F Madras THE HINDU in English 28 Apr 91 p 5

[Article by Anand K. Sahay from New Delhi: "Melange of Characters on Electoral Stage"; quotation marks as published]

[Text] 'Ravana' and 'Sita' have come together on the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] ticket, giving the Ramayana a new twist. Tehsildar Singh, until not long ago the dreaded robber baron and son of the legendary Chambal outlaw, Man Singh, and a former U.P. [Uttar Pradesh] police chief, Mr. S. C. Dixit, better known now for his crusade for the Vishwa Hindu Parishad [VHP], have also met each other on the common ground provided by the BJP.

The man who caught dirty government cops who were more like robbers, Mr. T. N. Chaturvedi, former Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), also finds himself under the same blanket as the 'dirty cop' and the 'robber'.

These are among the mystifying aspects of the nominations for the tenth Lok Sabha elections which closed on Friday. Obviously dogged party activists have been given short shrift. But this might be too narrow a view. Actually, the BJP may well have calculated that the hard Hindu party image it was gaining for itself needed a soft edge.

Unwritten norms have, of course, been given the go-by. A former C&AG, given the sensitive nature of his last assignment, ought not to join a political party after retirement. A pity that Mr. Chaturvedi was tempted, but should the BJP—a party that has always spoken loudly for propriety in public life—have tempted him?

Tinsel World Figures

Only about six years ago the Congress(I) was sharply criticised for bringing Mr. Amitabh Bachchan, the film star into the poll fray. Quite rightly it was asked why a person with no political background should be thrust on to the floor of the Lok Sabha to be a law-maker, and how well, given his limited experience in public life, would he be able to serve the people?

Compared to Mr. Rajesh Khanna, whom the Congress(I) has chosen to field from New Delhi, Mr. Bachchan was a godsend, meaning no disrespect to Mr. Khanna, but speaking only of the horizons the two personalities appear to comprehend from what is known about them. Mr. Khanna is not in a minority of one. What, for instance, is Mr. Victor Banerjee doing aspiring to be a MP [Member of Parliament]? Or, for that matter, 'Sita' and 'Ravana', or Chetan Chauhan, and the Nawab of Pataudi, goodly souls though they may be.

Of course, it is not the individuals themselves who are to blame, really. What can, after all, be wrong with aspiring? Perhaps, the trouble is with the temper of the times. Clearly, it must be the perception of parties that the race would be close. Thus, not wanting to take a chance, they are fielding names that have personified glamour, sacrificing principle, politics and all, in the hope that that abstract commodity would bring in the votes.

Remember Mr. N. T. Rama Rao. Unlike MGR or Mr. Karunanidhi, who had a track record in politics, Mr. Rama Rao's record was mainly confined to the silver screen. But he made it with a vengeance though opinions on his performance in political life have not always been complimentary.

It can be no surprise that if the political parties are eagerly grabbing glamour boys and girls, or clutching at any straw, they would have no compunction attracting defectors from other parties or detractors of their own

ideologies. People need reminding that defection is a crime only in the hallowed chambers of Parliament. It matters little if they should defect to get into Parliament.

The Congress(I), the BJP, the Janata Dal and the Janata Dal(S) must share a common lack of guilt on this score. They have all given honour to defectors, presented them to the press and the public as trophies and then run them again as their own agents (who knows some could be double agents). The names are too numerous to mention. Nor is it fair to mention only a few, even by way of substantiation. The papers have been too full of them in the past few weeks.

Cynical Manipulation

It is difficult to recall any other national election when so many defectors or those innocent of public affairs have flocked to the poll bazaar to present themselves as wares, wearing either the 'for sale' or the 'to let' sign. Such cynical manipulation of the democratic process will, no doubt, be difficult to beat for a long time to come. And we are not even talking of the johnnies-come-lately from the diplomatic service, the police force, the administration and the Army, who successfully queued for tickets outside party offices.

Time was when a large proportion of MPs or candidates for elections, used to be the dirtladen, close-to-the earth kind of people, most of them semi-literate, innocent of parlour codes. Many in the race today are their mirror opposites. It is worth wondering which lot produced the better Parliament or showed greater commitment to the task for which they were chosen. The new generation of MPs may well ask what is 'commitment'.

There has also been failure of another kind in our political life which has showed itself up in party nominations. In this respect, the best examples are perhaps from the Janata Dal. After the expiry of time for nominations, the party was not able to provide a list of its candidates. It did not possess anything so systematic.

Indeed, a party drawing sustenance from U.P. and Bihar could not announce a single candidate's name for the U.P. Assembly which has 425 seats. So, the Janata Dal asked all aspirants to file nominations, saying that the final revelation as to who the real candidates of the party ('friends of the people'?) are would be made after the last date for withdrawals. Clearly, there was blood on the carpet and fights within fights among the different caste, sub-caste and cabal groups which prevented clear-cut announcements in time.

Is this the party which is in the hunt for the Peacock Throne? Is it a party at all or a party on the basis of whose purported emergence surmises and hypotheses are advanced on the future of coalitional politics in India?

The party's own Left allies, the CPI [Communist Party of India] in particular, are paying the price of mistaking a roughly-hewn conglomerate of warring groups for a party proper that would at long last place the 'nouveau poor', if not the poor, on India's agenda. Left leaders have often enough run to the supreme leader of the Janata Dal to check who they should discuss seat adjustments with. Naturally, in the circumstances, there can have been no answer.

Fighting War Lords

The party's war lords fighting for their own survival in U.P., it transpired, were successfully blocking seat adjustments in Bihar by moving heaven and earth to get their own nominees through at the expense of the party as well as the allies, impairing the fate of the alliance as a whole. The result has been the mushrooming of rebel Left candidates in both U.P. and Bihar.

In sharp contrast, there has been no bloodshed in the CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist] for the party ticket. Indeed, the party has successfully effected a change of guard, the normal process of renewal. The BJP and the CPI present a similar picture, though in the CPI there have been revolts against seats offered to the Janata Dal, and not on the choice of the CPI candidates themselves, except for the case of one candidate in north Bihar. The Congress(I) has been fighting itself for a hundred years, but has managed to keep going. The incidence of group fighting has perhaps been no less this time.

To a large extent, most parties have fielded sitting candidates to avoid confusion. The bottomline has been 'winnability', as they say, rather than any conspicuous individual merit of candidates.

* Number of Lok Sabha Candidates Announced

91AS0975A Madras THE HINDU in English 3 May 91 p 1

[Text] New Delhi, May 2—Politics seems to be attracting more and more men and women in the electoral battle for the Tenth Lok Sabha. The number of candidates left in the fray after the last day for withdrawals is almost 50 percent more than in the November 1989 poll. The Election Commission has now been able to do its arithmetic and it was officially announced today that there are 9,107 candidates for the 537 Lok Sabha constituencies, against 6,160 candidates for 529 constituencies in 1989.

As expected Uttar Pradesh [UP] with 85 seats has the largest number of would-be MPs [members of Parliament]. A total of 1,588 contestants are in the fray, with Bihar following closely—1,494 candidates for the 54 seats. The rest of the numbers are in three digits, with Maharashtra fielding 863 candidates for 48 seats; Madhya Pradesh has attracted 675 candidates for 40 seats; and Andhra Pradesh will see 595 candidates fighting it out for 42 seats.

Tamil Nadu comes next with 460 candidates for 39 Lok Sabha seats. It is for the assembly elections in the State that some kind of a record has been created with the

Palipattu Assembly constituency attracting 264 candidates and Aravakurichi 249. Delhi with only seven parliamentary seats has also seen a record 502 candidates and East Delhi leads as the Lok Sabha constituency with the largest number of candidates—105. In fact the ballot paper for East Delhi will pose some problems and after some discussion it was found that a paper of 69 cms by 86 cms size would be able to accommodate all the names and symbols. The Election Commission is making arrangements for extra ballot boxes for this constituency.

On the other end of the scale is Lakshadweep which has only two candidates for its single Lok Sabha seat. This island will see a direct contest between Mr. P.M. Sayeed of the Congress(I) and Mr K.K. Mohammed Koya of the Janata Dal.

In Punjab, it is the Ludhiana seat which has attracted the maximum number of candidates, 28, which the entire state with 13 seats will see 223 candidates in the field. Assam with 14 seats has a more modest tally of 167 candidates.

What the law says: Dr. R.P. Bhalla, Deputy Election Commissioner, today told reporters that although a number of petitions had been received by the Commission from candidates and parties who were unable to file their 'B' forms in time which would have enabled them to get their party symbol, the Commission was not expected to consider any application favourably. The law lays down clearly that any form reaching the returning officer even five minutes after the close of withdrawals, which was April 29, 3 p.m. for this election, will not be considered. Also if two candidates produce the authorised 'B' form from the same political party, both the candidates will be treated as independents and will have to choose a free symbol.

Postal ballot papers have to be printed and sent off within 48 hours of the last date of withdrawal to ensure that they reach the electors in time for them to fill in the ballots and return it to the returning officer before the start of counting. Postal ballots which reach after the counting has started for that constituency are rejected, under the law.

Besides officers and men of the armed forces, the paramilitary forces, diplomats and their families abroad, police officers and men on duty outside their States, officers and men on election duty outside their States, those under preventive detention, there are also special VIPs who are eligible to exercise their franchise through a postal ballot. Those expecting to be away during elections and who fall in these categories have to write to the returning officers of their constituencies within ten days of notification of polls indicating that they would like to exercise their franchise through a postal ballot.

Postal delays: Among the special VIPs who can exercise their democratic right in this manner are the President, the Vice-President, Governors, Lieutenant Governors, the Prime Minister, chief ministers and ministers at the Centre and the States. Dr. Bhalla said that the postal ballot system was not working properly as there were postal delays and often the voter did not get his paper in time.

The Commission has had some difficulties collecting the final information on candidates from some of the constituencies in Uttar Pradesh and queries had to be sent back to returning officers. One UP list showed three BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] candidates in Sultanpur, which is an impossibility for even if there were three candidates the Commission can officially give the party symbol to only one.

The process of tabulating the exact number of candidates of each of the nine national level recognised political parties is expected to be completed tomorrow. However, rough figures available from some of the national parties show that the Congress(I) is contesting 499 seats, boycotting 13 in Punjab and leaving others to its allies in Gujarat, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The BJP is fighting for 478 seats, the Samajvadi Janata Party has managed candidates for 378 Lok Sabha seats, the CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist] has a list of 68 candidates and the CPI [Communist Party of India] 42 seats. The Janata Dal's final list was not available as confusion continues to prevail but estimates are that it is contesting about 300 seats leaving others to its allies in the National Front and the left parties.

* Officials Point Out 'Sensitive' Polling Spots

* New Delhi Points Out

91AS0974A Madras THE HINDU in English 27 Apr 91 p 9

[Text] New Delhi, 25 April—The Government has identified about 70 to 80 out of the 537 parliamentary constituencies going to the polls in the coming general election from 20 May as "very sensitive" in the wake of the communal and caste violence witnessed since 1989. Accordingly, it has made adequate arrangements to deploy central para-military forces to assist the States in the peaceful conduct of the elections.

These constituencies are among the 300 needing special vigilance, according to information available with the State Governments and on the basis of assessments of the Centre. The Union Home Secretary, Mr. Raj Bhargav told media-persons that as many as 1,350 company days of para-military forces would be doing election duty at different dates in various States.

Although this strength is slightly less than what was enlisted for the last election, the reduction is largely due to the para-military forces doing duty in the sensitive States of Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab. However, Mr. Bhargava allayed apprehensions that the reduced availability of forces would compromise the security.

He said already a sizeable force was available with the States, both by way of police, and the Home Guards. Besides, the State Governments have also been asked to

discuss with the Army authorities their needs, so that in the event of any serious law and order emergency, the troops could be called out at short notice to assist the administration.

Mr. Bhargav said steps have also been taken to ensure that any disruption in transportation due to pressures of election did not hamper the movement of the security forces. He said the despatch of the forces has been planned in such a way they would be available to the States for the first and second day's poll (20 and 23 May) before 10 May itself so that they could take positions.

Similarly, for the third day's poll, (23 May), the movement of the forces released from the first day would be tied up to be available to the State Governments well in time. Arrangements have already been made with the Indian Airlines to ensure the passage of the forces at short notice.

Similar arrangements have also been made with the railway authorities for providing special non-stop trains for facilitating rapid movement of the central forces.

PTI reports:

More than 15 lakh policemen, armed policemen and para-military forces would be involved in poll duty.

This would include 749,100 State police forces, 317,632 State armed police and 473,530 Home Guard personnel.

* West Bengal Polling

91AS0974B Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 7 May 91 p 3

[Text] The West Bengal Government has identified as many as 11,000 booths out of a total of 50,000 as "vulnerable and sensitive" and another 10,000 as "less vulnerable." While additional Central security forces will be deployed in those districts having a large number of communally sensitive pockets, a crack DGP's [Director General of Police] reserve force comprising para-military forces, normally stationed in Barrackpore in North 24-Parganas, will be posted in district towns considered violence-prone.

The law and order situation and the measures being taken by the State administration to prevent violence during the coming elections were reviewed at a meeting convened by the State's Governor, Mr. Nurul Hasan, at Raj Bhavan in Calcutta on Monday. Among those who attended were the State's Chief Secretary, the Home Secretary, the Director General of Police and the State's Chief Election Officer. Mr. Hasan was reportedly informed of the security arrangements being made in the more sensitive areas of the State.

Later, the DGP, Mr. A.P. Mukherjee, told reporters at Writers' Buildings that additional Central security forces would be deployed in the "more violence-prone" districts of South and North 24-Parganas, Howrah, Burdwan, Midnapore and West Dinajpur. A number of communally sensitive pockets were located in these districts. The crack reserve para-military forces which would only move into action on instructions from the DGP himself will be posted at Howrah, Barrackpore, Asansol, Burdwan, Midnapore and Siliguri. In a bid to relieve pressure on the local DIGs [Deputy Inspector General (of Police)] and Superintendents of Police, 20 senior police officers have been selected for duty in the districts. They would also assist local police officers in the sensitive Kalna-Katwa belt in Murshidabad, Asansol and Raiganj.

All the DIGs and SPs [Superintendents of Police] were summoned for a final round of talks on the security arrangements for the polls at the State Secretariat late last week, Mr. Mukherjee said. A number of communal and crime-prone areas were listed for special vigil. So far about 50 percent of a total of 75 companies of Central forces have arrived in the State. Among these are six companies already deployed in Darjeeling district. While it would not be possible for police personnel to attend to all the booths, the home guards on duty in the more vulnerable booths would be provided with fire-arms.

A State-wide hunt is presently on the track down anti-social and criminals in the districts. So far 3,932 people have been arrested as a preventive measure and arms and ammunition seized. Eighteen revolvers, 33 pipe-guns, a shot gun and 66 bombs have been impounded, Mr. Mukherjee said. Apprehending that illegal fire-arms including AK 47s could be smuggled into the State from Bihar during the polls, the State administration had earlier urged the Centre to hold elections in the bordering districts of Bihar and in West Bengal on the same day to preclude the smuggling in of arms from across the border, Mr. Mukherjee said.

Meanwhile, 13 Central observers have visited the State so far, the State's Chief Electoral Officer, Mrs. Leena Chakravarty, said. The total number of such observers allotted to West Bengal is 21. Mr. T.G. Joseph, the observer for Howrah and South Calcutta parliamentary constituencies left for Delhi after a meeting with Mrs. Chakravarty during the day. Mr. Jagdish Sagar, the observer for Calcutta north-east and north-west constituencies has paid a second visit to the State.

The SUCI [expansion not given] leader, Mr. Fatick Ghosh, complained to the CEO [Chief Electoral Officer] during the day that he apprehended violence during campaigning in the Kultali area. Mrs. Chakravarty reportedly told him that the DM [District Magistrate], South 24-Parganas, had been asked to ensure that the party's electioneering in the area was not obstructed.

* Tamil Nadu 'Pockets'

91AS0974C Madras THE HINDU in English 3 May 91 p 3

[Text] Madras, 2 May—About 150 sensitive pockets have been identified in Tamil Nadu where extra precaution will be taken by the law enforcing authorities for smooth conduct of election campaign and also polling in the State.

Special police force will be deployed in adequate strength, communication network will be strengthened, developments in these pockets will be periodically reviewed and a constant watch will be kept by the Collectors, senior police officers in the districts and also the Central and State Poll Observers.

Already village-wise identification of the sensitive pockets have been worked out by the Collectors based on past records relating to industrial, political, communal and religious incidents which disrupted public peace and also trouble-prone areas such as Dharmapuri, Kangeyam and Satyamangalam.

The Chief Secretary and the Chief Electoral Officer have already completed the overall review of law and order situation and also arrangements for maintaining public peace during elections with the Collectors of Tiruchi and Pudukottai districts and the situation in other district would be also reviewed.

Mr. M. Ragupathi, Chief Electoral Officer, told pressmen today that almost all the Central Observers appointed for Tamil Nadu had taken charge of the Constituencies and had reviewed the situation particularly in sensitive pockets in the State.

The CEO said that simultaneously the police authorities are also constantly reviewing the developments in the identified pockets so that the law enforcing machinery could be geared to meet any development.

* Booths in Assam

91AS0974D Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 13 Apr 91 p 4

[Boldface words as published]

[Text] Guwahati, 12 April—The Assam government, which yesterday gave the green signal to the Centre to hold elections in the state, has identified 72 of the 126 Assembly constituencies as "sensitive and vulnerable."

Besides possible threats from militants, the district administrations have taken into consideration communal and other factors while categorising these constituencies as "vulnerable."

The Assam Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Bhaskar Barua, said today that the state election department is prepared to hold elections on whatever dates the Election Commission decides.

Over 1.18 crore voters are to exercise their franchise in Assam, which went unrepresented in the ninth Lok Sabha.

The state government's recent decision to transfer four deputy commissioners has invited the Assam Election Department's ire, with the latter bringing the matter to the notice of the Election Commission. State Election officials contend that the transfers took effect after the 25 March deadline fixed by the Election Commission.

Following the intimation by the state election department, the Election Commission has asked the Assam government to explain why and under what circumstances were these officials transferred.

Mixed reaction: There has been a mixed reaction to the election announcement in Assam, with the AGP [Assam People's Council] demanding withdrawal of the Army and the state Congress(I) grudgingly welcoming the polls, have failed to prevent it from being held.

Jolted by the poll announcement, political parties, most of which never expected an early elections, are at a loss. There is hardly any clear poll strategy among the parties, and neither has much progress been made on the list of respective party candidates. The general feeling was that the shadow of ULFA [United Liberation Front of Assam] militancy would force the government to defer the elections here until after November.

The AGP leader, Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, said his party is ready to face the polls but questioned the Centre's wisdom in deciding to go ahead with the elections without initiating talks with the ULFA.

Speaking to THE TELEGRAPH the former chief minister said the Centre must withdraw the Army before the elections are held. "We do not want a Tripura-type poll to be held in Assam. The people cannot come out freely to vote if the Army jawans hang around," Mr. Mahanta said.

The PCCI [Pradesh Congress Committee-I] president, Mr. Hiteshwar Saikia, said his party is ready for the polls, a statement which is in sharp contradiction to the views of the party high command. The party top brass in New Delhi desperately tried to convince the Chandra Shekhar government that the situation in Assam was still not conducive for a free and fair polls. The Congress(I) is likely to be worst hit because of the pool announcement, as the ULFA threat to members of national parties to support its "national liberation struggle" still looms large.

The Congress(S)[Socialist] and the CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist] have also welcomed the polls. Although not placed on strong wickets, most parties have criticised the Congress(I)[Indira] for having tried to sabotage the process of restoration of democracy in the state.

* Analyst Rules Out Coalition Government

91AS0967A Madras THE HINDU in English 11 May 91 p 9

[Article by K.K. Katyal; boldface words as published]

[Text] New Delhi, 10 May—The days of "outside support" are over and if any party or section of politicians entertains such an illusion, it had better be given up. If a single party gets a majority in the Lok Sabha poll later this month, the formation of a new Government will not

pose a problem. There may not be much difficulty either if the largest single party gets slightly less than 50 percent of the seats—it will exercise pull on independents and tiny groups and gather the required strength. But what if the largest group is well below the majority mark?

Those who had closely followed the working of the President, Mr. R. Venkataraman's mind during the period between the resignation of the Prime Minister, Mr. Chandra Shekhar, and the dissolution of the 9th Lok Sabha detected a firm disinclination to allow an arrangement, based on assurances of support without participation in the Government. The President is certain to apply this yardstick in the future, if the occasion arises.

Obviously, Mr. Venkataraman had in mind the fate of the two experiments after the 1989 elections—the National Front Government, which collapsed following the withdrawal of "outside support" by the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], and the manner in which the Congress(I) de-stabilised the Chandra Shekhar set-up after propping it up. The President was convinced that stability could be ensured only through participation in the Government of the parties that agree to cooperate with one another. In other words, he was for a genuine participatory coalition.

Brave postures: With the election less than two weeks away, it is understandable for the various parties to adopt brave postures. None of them could afford to talk about a coalition lest that should be construed as lack of confidence. In private discussions, however, they do not exclude a "hung" Lok Sabha while sketching different scenarios.

There will be, in that eventuality, no escape from a coalition, though who will cooperate with whom will remain in the realm of speculation till the election results are out. The job will not be easy, considering that acrimony and bitterness, imported in the poll campaign, has increased the distance among the major parties.

The President will certainly agree with what was stated by two Jan Morcha leaders, Mr. Satya Pal Malik and Mr. Dinesh Trivedi. "The recent experience" they sound in a statement, "has proved beyond doubt that the so-called outside support of political parties to form the Government without joining the same, has not only failed miserably but also has brought chaos to the administration. In the last 18 months, the country's progress has suffered a lot. Therefore any outside support should not be considered by the President for the formation of a Government. If a political party wants to support another then it should be made compulsory for them (supporting party) to join the Government.

They wanted the parties to declare in advance, their preferences (in the matter of extending support to others) for the benefit of voters. This advice is certain to go unheeded.

Incidentally, what is the "hung" concept? In British jurisprudence, a "hung" jury was the one which was so irrevocably divided in its opinion that it could not give a verdict. If the electorate send a hung Lok Sabha for the second time, the message is clear—it wants a coalition. This is accepted by all party leaders, including the Congress(I) President, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi.

* Papers Report Stands of Lesser Parties

* Jharkand Mukti Morcha

91AS0970A Madras THE HINDU in English 7 May 91 p 6

[Text] Ranchi, 6 May—The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha will work for a separate Jarkhand State with 22 districts of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, says its election manifesto released here.

The manifesto promises equal rights and opportunities to women, free legal and medical aids to the weaker section.

Among other things it pledged to work for complete prohibition and implementation of Mandal Commission recommendations. It will strive to set up Urdu academy, minorities commission, Haj committee and minorities finance commission.

It says it is against demolition of the Babri Masjid and wants a new temple constructed a little away from the Masjid.

* Kerala Left Democratic Front

91AS0970B Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 3 May 91 p 7

[Article by S. Rajappa]

[Text] Thiruvananthapuram, 2 May—The ruling Left Democratic Front [LDF] in Kerala, in its manifesto for the 23 May Assembly elections released here today, promised to exert pressure on the Centre to implement the Mandal Commission recommendations in respect of jobs in the Central Government and public sector undertakings while in the State Government jobs, it would continue the existing pattern of reservations, if voted back to power.

The 34-page manifesto promised to complete various welfare projects initiated during its current term of office. Agricultural and industrial production would be raised by eight to 10 percent. It would take steps to strengthen traditional industries like coir, handloom, cashew, beedi and bamboo. The present mode of concessions would be restructured and the single-window system introduced for rapid industrial development of the State.

The LDF would foster unity and good relations among all religious groups and strive for protection of democracy and secularism.

For improving standard and quality of education, the LDF would appoint a review committee. The plus-two system would be extended throughout the State and a medical university and a Sanskrit university would be established in the next five years.

The LDF would take up a time-bound programme to ensure shelter for all and extend loans to the weaker sections to build 100,000 houses a year.

The district council administration would be strengthened and the Panchayat Act amended to provide more powers to panchayats.

Our Staff Correspondent adds from Delhi: The Central Secretariat of the Communist Party of India has said, "it is shocking to learn that joint candidates have been set up by the Congress(I), Muslim League and the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] in the Badgara Lok Sabha constituency and Beypore Assembly constituency in Kerala in the ensuing elections." The party described it as an "unholy alliance."

* Peoples' Manifesto

91AS0970C New Delhi PATRIOT in English 3 May 91 p 3

[Text] Sixteen peoples movements organisations have jointly issued a 'Peoples Manifesto,' which calls forth a radical restructuring of the political and administrative systems in the country, to achieve a true federal political system.

The manifesto, released on Thursday, upholds the principles of effective decentralisation and greater autonomy for various states and regions, as also the right to self-determination of different 'oppressed nationalities and indigenous peoples' and their demands for viable political units such as states, autonomous regions etc.

The spokespersons of the 16 organisations declared support to the implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations and also declared their support to candidates from the various peoples movements. While candidates who sincerely uphold the peoples' manifesto will be supported, the peoples' movements are clear in their option to defeat communal and authoritarian parties at the hustings.

The manifesto further demanded that right to work, right to housing and right to information be acknowledged, through proper legislations, as fundamental rights of the citizens.

The 16 peoples' movements organisations, which signed the manifesto are: Narmada Bachao Andolan, All Jharkhand Students Union, National Fishworkers' Forum, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan, Autonomous State Demand Committee, Karbi Anglong, TVS Employees Union, Nirman Mazdoor Panchayat, Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights, All Tribals Students Union, Manipur Jharkhandi's Organisation for Human Rights, Jharkhand Mahila Mukti Samiti, Goa Trade Unions and Traditional Workers' Coordination Committee, Jan Vikas Andolan and Central Board of Dawoodi Bohra Community and Ekta, National Campaign for Housing Rights and Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha.

* All-India Students' Federation

91AS0970D Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 27 Apr 91 p 4

[Article by Monimoy Dasgupta]

[Text] Chandigarh, 26 April—The elections in Punjab is likely to be fierce with unpredictable results as several top militants and their family members have entered the electoral fray.

The All-India Sikh Students' Federation [AISSF] (Manjit), known for its militant ideology, has for the first time entered the electoral arena with the support of the extremist Panthic committee (Manochahal). The AISSF (Manjit) had worked behind the scenes during the last parliamentary polls and ensured victory for all Akali Dal (Mann) candidates.

The Khalistan Commando Force (Zaffarwal) will also contest in the state elections with the support of the hardline Panthic Committee (Zaffarwal) led by Mr. Wassan Singh Zaffarwal.

The strongest of the three Panthic Committees in Punjab, the Panthic Committee (Dr. Sohan Singh), which enjoys the support of five militant outfits also has decided to reverse its stand of boycotting the elections.

Efforts by a section of militants to field 'Sukha' and 'Jinda,' assassins of Gen. A.S. Vaidya, have failed. Both of them have refused to contest the elections due to "differences of opinion" in the militant rank and file over the issue of participation in the polls. While a group of militants feel that taking part in the democratic process would be detrimental to the Sikh struggle for "Khalistan," the other coterie believes that it would be "a step forward towards achieving a sovereign Sikh state."

Even the list of candidates released by the Akali Dal (Mann) includes at least six militants or their close relatives. This faction led by the Shiromani Akali Dal president, Mr. Simranjit Singh Mann, has decided to contest all the 13 parliamentary and 117 Assembly seats in the state.

According to the list of candidates of the Akali Dal (Mann), the father of one of the assassins of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Mr. Tarlok Singh, has been fielded from the Fatehgarh Churian Assembly seat in the Gurdaspur district. Mr. Balbinder Singh Sanga, brother of top militant Sukhbinder Singh Sanga, has filed his nomination from Tarn Taran Assembly constituency. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale's brother, Capt. Harcharan Singh Rode, will be the Akali Dal (Mann) nominee from

Baghapurana. The Akali Dal (Mann) list been released by the chairman of the Shiraman Akali Dal, Mr. Ranjit Singh Brahmpura.

The AISSF (Manjit) chief, Mr. Manjit Singh, yesterday filed his nomination papers from the Tarn Taran parliamentary constituency and Valtoha Assembly seat. The Tarn Taran parliamentary seat was won by Mr. Simranjit Singh Mann in 1989.

Among the detained militants who have figured in the AISSF (Manjit) list of candidates is Nirmal Singh Dhillon, at present lodged in Sangrur jail for the murder of Sant Harchand Singh Longowal. Nirmal Singh Dhillon will contest the Ludhiana Lok Sabha seat, earlier held by the former external affairs minister, Mr. I.K. Gujral.

Another militant Mohan Inder Singh detained in Ajmer jail will contest as AISSF (Manjit) candidate for Amritsar South Assembly constituency.

* Haryana Vikash Party

91ASN07IE Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 25 Apr 91 p 4

[Text] New Delhi, 24 April—The manifesto of the Haryana Vikash Party, which was released today by Mr. Bansi Lal, pledges to restore law and order in the state, stop political decay, put Haryana on the forefront of modern, progressive states and give it a distinct Haryanvi identity.

Referring to "Meham-I and Meham-II" as examples of political criminalisation in the country, the manifesto accuses a section of the administration of being criminalised and in direct league with antisocial elements. It promises to come down heavily on antisocial elements in the state if voted to power.

At a press conference today, Mr. Bansi Lal said differences with the National Front over seat sharing had been sorted out. He said the National Front will fight a majority of the 10 Lok Sabha seats, while his Haryana Vikas Party will have a dominant share of the Assembly seats. The party is likely to get around 60 to 62 Assembly seats out of a total of 90.

The manifesto promises not to give away Chandigarh to Punjab unless the Centre foots the cost of building a modern capital for Haryana, and that too after a "just settlement of Haryana's territorial dispute with Punjab."

Mr. Bansi Lal said his party would demand that Abohar and Fazilka be given to Haryana in lieu of Chandigarh apart from monetary compensation.

Interestingly, the manifesto makes no reference to the Mandal Commission report, despite the party's alliance with the National Front. It says the party will strive to clear the backlog in reservation quotas through social recruitment drives, ensure agricultural land out of common panchayat land and extend relaxation in physical standards for recruitments in the police force.

Mr. Bansi Lal said while continuing 50 percent reservation in the state for Harijans and backward classes, he would seek to extend the fruits of reservation to the poor among upper castes by another 30 percent.

Describing the Gurnam Singh commission appointed by the Janata Dal(S) government in the state as a fraud, he said his own private members Bill admitted by Parliament provided a better model of reservation. The Bill could not come up for discussion because Parliament was dissolved.

To farmers, who are predominantly Jat's [farming caste] in the state, the party promises Sutlej Canal waters within one year of being elected.

In the end, the manifesto tries to take a leaf out of Mr. Devi Lal's book by promising the beneficiaries of the latter's old-age pension scheme that the money will reach them by the seventh of every month.

* NMF Panel Decision

91ASN07IF New Delhi PATRIOT in English 2 May 91 p 3

[Text] In a meeting on Wednesday, the Quami Mushawrat Committee of the proposed National Minority Front (NMF) decided to support the Janata Dal and Left Front candidates at the national level for the coming Lok Sabha polls. Where Samajvadi Janata Party (SJP) candidates 'with impeccable secular credentials' are available, the committee will also work for them.

The decision was taken after gauging the response of various national parties to the Minority Front manifesto which was sent to all of them. Said Committee convenor Javed Habeeb in a press conference on Wednesday, "only the JD [Janata Dal], SJP, CPI-M [Communist Party of India-Marxist] and CPI [Communist Party of India] responded. The Congress did not."

The Mushawrat Committee does not recognise the split in Janata Dal and had tried hard to bring both factions together—without success. Says Mr. Habeeb, "both Mr. Chandra Shekhar and V.P. Singh were favourable but some leaders in the Janata Dal spiked our efforts."

After a long meeting with V.P. Singh on 13 April (where six committee leaders were present) it was decided to send Zafaryab Jilani, Quami Morcha leader, to Mulayam Singh Yadav for mediation. The attempt failed.

The six committee leaders who tried were Javed Habeeb, Ahmad Moazzam, Maulana Yaseen Akhtar Misbahi, Zafaryab Jilani, Dr. N.H. Zaffi and Dr. Naeem Hamid. Thus the Committee decided to support secular and strong candidates of the JD or SJP in the Uttar Pradesh [UP] Assembly polls.

Mr. Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi, president of Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen and the United Minorities Front in Assam have been authorised to decide about Andhra Pradesh and Assam respectively in the light of the local political situation. The committee is wary of the AGP [Assam People's Council] in Assam.

In Tamilnadu, the DMK [Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam] and its allies will be supported. In Kerala, the Left Alliance shall be given support except in constituencies where Muslim League candidates are in the fray. In Karnataka, the JD and SJP understanding will be given priority in supporting candidates for the Lok Sabha.

The committee has formed three sub-committees to select secular candidates who are in a winning position against the Congress and BJP [Bharatiya janata Party] in UP, Delhi and Rajasthan. The campaign committee consists of Ahmad Moazzam, Javed Habeeb, Mujaeebuddin Khan, Mufti Mohd Zahid, Shakeel Rehman, Dr. Mohd Irfan and Mohd Nasir.

The Delhi Campaign Committee has Mujeebuddin Khan and Wasim Gazi. Mr. Zafaryab Jilani heads the selection committee for UP candidates. Along with Dr. Naeem Hamid, Babu Saleem Ansari, Dr. Zaheer Ahmad and Feroz Talat, Habibuddin Khan and Manzoor Alam along with Abdul Qayoom Akhtar and Saeed Saeedi will be in the Rajasthan Committee.

* Republican Party of India

91AS0970G Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 13 Apr 91 p 4

[Text] Calcutta, 12 April—The Republican Party of India, which was founded by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, has decided to support the Left Front alliance with the National Front and Janata Dal in the coming elections.

A press release here said the Republican Party would field 30 candidates in the coming Lok Sabha elections in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and the Union Territory of Delhi.

* Chandra Shekhar Gives Stand on Elections

91AS0977A Calcutta THE SUNDAY STATESMAN in English 5 May 91 pp 1, 7

[Text] New Delhi, May 4—The Prime Minister today said the Election Commission was a constitutional authority and it should not be involved in any controversy, report UNI and PTI. "We must respect the constitutional authority of the Chief Election Commissioner," he said.

Mr Chandra Shekhar took this position when reporters asked him at the end of the Defence investiture ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan about the controversy between the Election Commission and two Ministers of his Cabinet on the model code of conduct.

Asked about the law and order situation in Bihar, where certain parties were said to be finding it difficult to carry out their election campaign, the Prime Minister agreed that the situation in the State was not happy but said it was for the Governor or the President to take action.

He called upon the major parties to adopt a conciliatory policy towards the Punjab militants as the country could not afford to prolong the confrontation with them. He said he had not held any talks with the militants till now though he was in touch with go-betweens who wanted the Government to initiate a dialogue with the militants. Mr Chandra Shekhar said he had to know the views of the militants before talks could begin.

He said he was not among those who wanted to fight terrorists after ensuring security for themselves. "They want the crisis to continue. They think the nation will fall apart if they are not there."

Asked about the demand of certain Sikh organizations to hold General Elections in Punjab earlier, the Prime Minister said he could press the Election Commission on this only up to a point. The attitude of certain parties was also "not happy" on early elections, he added.

According to Our Special Representative, the Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, Mr Kamal Morarka, has said the Government is maintaining "contacts" with some militant groups in Punjab, seeing in them a desire to return to the mainstream.

He told reporters during an informal talk today that the elections in Punjab would serve as a referendum on whether the people preferred to boycott the polls as the Congress(I) wanted it. He said the Congress(I) wanted Punjab to be ruled by force.

Mr Morarka did not see anything wrong in talking to people who held "extreme" views. Only the Government should not use the same "extreme" language. He thought those who advocated stern measures in Punjab and opposed elections were talking in "extreme tones."

Denying that Mr Chandra Shekhar had talked to any hardcore extremist from Punjab, Mr Morarka said "contacts"—as opposed to "talks"—had been established with some "emissaries." The main purpose of the contacts was to bring the militants into the mainstream and to stop the killing of innocent people in Punjab.

Refusing to brand all militants "anti-nationals," Mr Morarka said the democratic process required the Government to talk to everyone, even those who appeared to be "misguided."

He claimed that the militants in Punjab had "softened" at the idea of an election in the State. Forces which opposed elections in the State were only helping the "dismemberment" of the country as one part of the country could not be kept as a "colony." The people in Punjab felt that they were being denied the democratic right of an election.

Mr Morarka criticized the Election Commission for revising its opinion on elections in Punjab after the AICC(I) [All India Congress Committee-Indira] spokesman, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, had said that the new Government could reverse the process of election in the State.

The Samajwadi Janata Dal spokesman, Mr Satya Prakash Malaviya, criticized Mr Rajiv Gandhi for appealing to the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] to withdraw from the elections in Punjab. He said the Congress(I) had committed a blunder by boycotting the Punjab polls.

According to our Staff Correspondent, the Congress(I) spokesman, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, said the Punjab election had greater implications than just winning seats.

An irate group today threw stones and tyres at the Prime Minister's motorcade as Mr Chandra Shekhar was coming to Kanpur after addressing an election rally at Kannauj. The group was protesting against police inaction following the killing of one person in a clash between two groups in Chaubepur, about 25 km away.

Mr Chandra Shekhar expressed apprehension about the outbreak of "serious" communal violence before the elections and said it would pose a grave danger to peace during the elections.

Two top "Babbar Khalsa" militants, Baldev Singh Pakhomajra and Gurmeet Singh, involved in more than 100 killings in Punjab and Chandigarh and carrying a reward of Rs[rupees]1 lakh on their heads each, were killed in an encounter in Chandigarh this afternoon, adds UNI.

Representatives of the Congress(S) [Socialist], one of the nine national parties, were not present at the meeting.

* Maharashtra: Congress-I Curbing Infighting

91AS0899C Madras THE HINDU in English 27 Apr 91 p 11

[Article: "Congress(I) Wary of Infighting in Maharashtra"]

[Text] Bombay, April 26. Now that the Congress(I) line up in Maharashtra has been cleared by the party president, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi after an elaborate and time consuming exercise, sometimes bordering on a charade, the party unit in the State has decided to build safeguards against possible internal sabotage at the hustings. It is recognised that though nothing significant has yet materialised, there is scope for intra-party rivalry manifesting to undercut the prospects of candidates, a feature not so uncommon in the Congress(I).

With this in view, the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress(I) Committee [MPCC(I)] has decided to appoint observers to keep a tab on each of the 48 Lok Sabha seats being contested by the Congress(I) and curb any mischief from within at any level. Sending out observers in itself is not a new feature, even in Maharashtra, but setting up such a large-sized panel is unprecedented. Normally, only "sensitive" and "potentially problematic constituencies" are shortlisted for such insurance.

With this decision to be implemented in the next few days, Mr. Shivajirao Patil Nilangekar, MPCC(I) Chief, has given the signal that after the party list had been finalised by Mr. Gandhi, that too, after a consensus, no hankypanky would be tolerated.

Mr. Nilangekar, inducted into the driver's seat after the political crisis within the Congress(I) and the Government led by Mr. Sharad Pawar in January, would now like to conduct the party and its affairs in a manner that it does not become a handmaiden of the Chief Minister.

Anti-Pawar tilt: Though the reactions from several sections in the Congress(I) is unusually guarded, there are sufficient indications to believe that despite a consensus in Delhi on the list, there is enough cause for complaints. There is a substantive anti-Pawar tilt in the nominations cleared by the New Delhi top brass and as a consequence, Mr. Pawar himself will be under close watch. There are some who believe that efforts would be made to undermine the chances of candidates belonging to the two sides of the divide by both the rival camps despite the best efforts of Mr. Nilangekar.

The high command itself has chosen to put the onus of victory, for instance, in Nanded constituency on Mr. Shankarrao Chavan, Rajya Sabha MP [Member of Parliament] and former Chief Minister. When he declined to contest in favour of his son, Mr. Ashok Chavan, who lost in 1989, Mr. Chavan was told plainly that he would have to choose the nominee in Nanded. A former Minister, Mr. Kamalkishore Kadam reportedly undermined Mr. Ashok Chavan's elective merit. Though on a different footing, Mr. P. V. Narasimharao was also asked to exercise his option for choosing a candidate from Ramtek.

Similarly, despite Mr. Vasant Sathe's desire to shift from Wardha, preferably to Nagpur, he has been asked to fight from there itself so that a Cabinet colleague and confidant of Mr. Pawar, Mr. Datta Meghe can be fielded from Nagpur. Implied in this is the party's view that Mr. Pawar, apart from his general and expected obligations to the party's interests as a Chief Minister, will have to strive hard to secure the seat for the Congress(I).

It is in Nagpur that the two-time winner of the seat for the Congress(I), Mr. Banwarilal Purohit switched to BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] and was one of those who revolted against Mr. Pawar in January.

All those who were a party to the January revolt, have either found a place or their suggestions have been accepted. A Pawar supporter, Mr. Balasaheb Vikhe-Patil has been denied the Kopargaon seat which he held. One reason is that he was a convenor of the Congress Forum for Democracy which was critical of Mr. Gandhi. Though Mr. Purohit, who is out of the Congress(I) and

into the BJP fold, is now more of an external threat to the party, the others who combatted Mr. Pawar at the high command's bidding in January, like Mr. Prataprao Bhosle (Satara), Mr. A. R. Antulay (Kulaba), and Mr. V. R. Gadgil who led the attack from New Delhi have got party tickets.

Unenviable task: It is Mr. Pawar's unenviable task to help these people win, in concert with Mr. Nilangekar who does not see the MPCC(I) as "subordinate to the Government."

It is clear that the loyalists—especially those of the 1978 vintage—have an over-riding responsibility now in the party in Maharashtra, insofar as the Congress(I) is concerned. But on the other hand, with as many as 18 sitting MPs in the dissolved Lok Sabha out of the 24, in the list the emphasis has been loyalty to the Congress(I) and of course, Mr. Gandhi. The list indicates that the high command's exercise to shake Mr. Pawar up a bit a little over three months ago continues to cast its shadow on the election calculations and prospects of the Congress(I).

Our Nagpur Correspondent reports:

After a week-long suspense about the Ramtek seat, the Congress(I) finally confirmed the name of Mr. Tejsinghrao Bhosale late on Thursday night. The choice for the Ramtek constituency had been much debated for quite some time now. The delay in announcing the candidate seemed quite abnormal to many and it is not clear even now as to why it was so.

The matter became curiouser when Congress(I) fielded candidates from all other constituencies in Vidarbha except Ramtek. It was only when people saw front-paged advertisements in the local dailies that they came to know about Bhosale's candidature from Ramtek.

The suspense heightened when Mr. Bhosale reached the District Collectorate with his team of supporters even before Mr. Datta Meghe, the Congress(I) candidate from Nagpur against BJP's Mr. Banwari Lal Purohit, had arrived there to file nomination. But Mr. Bhosale did not file his papers!

It may be mentioned here that relenting to regional pressures and pulls, the Congress(I) high command decided to omit Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao's name as the party's candidate from Ramtek. But without saying so, the high command, in a terse statement, said it was leaving the choice of the candidate to Mr. Rao.

Congress(I) leaders told THE HINDU that there had been specific orders from the top that no one was to file papers from Ramtek. The only conclusions that observers could draw was that some party VIP from outside would be fielded. There were strong rumours that party president, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi could well be the candidate.

Meanwhile, the State Janata Dal(S) leader, Mr. B. J. Agrawal said the list of party candidates for all 11 Vidarbha seats had been declared. The party campaign, he said, would simply ask the voters to compare the 40 years of Congress rule with the 4 months of JD(S) rule and leave the discretion to them.

Mr. Agrawal said all attempts to strike a poll adjustment with the Janata Dal had failed because of the adamant attitude of Mrs. Mrinal Gore. He admitted that the party's talks on electoral understanding with Shiv Sena too did not bear fruit.

* V.P. Singh Said Rallying the Masses

91AS0881B Cochin THE WEEK in English 21 Apr 91 pp 30-33, 36-37

[Article by Rashmi Saksen, Ajith Pillai and I. Chandramouli: "Poor Man's Raja"; italicized words and quotation marks as published]

[Text] The metamorphosis is complete. The Raja Sahib has taken a new avatar, has acquired a newspeak. In 1989 he was a crusader for value-based politics, a shaman exorcising the ghost of Bofors, a big-business basher, a knight in shining armour. All that changed in little less than a year.

Now, in 1991, the raja has turned himself into a pauper. In a metaphysical sense. He believes, almost maniacally, that he is the messiah of the marginalised masses—the backward classes, the minorities, the Dalits. That he is a reformer thrown up by history, precisely at this moment to tear down the high walls of social structure and usher in justice. Mandal-masjid is his double-barrel gun to shoot into lasting power.

But what if these vote banks turn out to be mirages? Vishwanath Pratap Singh, the phenomenon of yesteryear who has bloomed into a shrewd tactician, is apparently not worried. He nurtures a protracted vision. His mission, as he believes, does not end with ballots being stamped. He boasts of directing the dynamics of politics, unleashing new forces and setting in motion a coalition of the poor, the backwards and the minorities to create a new pattern in the social spectrum. This is his new faith.

Political sophistry or genuine reformist zeal? Is V.P. Singh a visionary or a crafty game-player? Will his queer mix of secularism and Mandalism unroll for him the red carpet to capital heights in Delhi?

Donning the mantle of the messiah of the havenots, Singh has been zipping through his home state of Uttar Pradesh [UP] with a zealous call: awaken and demand your share from the Indian society. The tenor of his speeches has been the same, whether he delivers them in Gujarat or Karnataka. But in UP it is further upscale. Singh and his campaigners are intimately aware of features of the audiences here and tailor their pieces accordingly.

Singh undoubtedly is at his best on the familiar homeground. Mounting the platform in village after village, he

lapses into colloquial Hindi, establishing an instant rapport, making the crowds respond to his questions and guffaw at his jokes and jibes.

Yet it is not the halcyon days of November 1989. As Singh flits through 12 parliamentary constituencies of UP covering 1,200 km in four days, the turnout at the meetings is moderate to good. Never overwhelming.

Singh has undoubtedly consolidated Muslims, Dalits and the backward classes here into his vote banks. They wait uncomplainingly for him to motor into their midst, heartily applaud him when he speaks of giving up Prime Ministership to save the Babri Masjid from demolition, and raise slogans of endearment when he talks of social justice.

Right from Bareilly to Etah, the very centre of Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav's stronghold, Singh speaks of his sacrifice for the masjid. In the Kurmi-dominated areas of Pilibhit, Lakhimpur Kheri, Sitapur and Hardoe, the pitch is slightly different. Here Mandal is the main theme.

Travelling through the Terai region farmed lucratively by the Sikhs, Singh does not fail to recall the savage riots of 1984. At Piliphit where the audience has a fair sprinkling of the Sikhs, he says: "I went to Harminder Sahib because I wanted to tell the Sikhs that they were not suspect. I want to remove the barriers being created among various communities." The listeners are visibly impressed.

His fight, he tells the people, is to get a fair share of wealth "for those who work with their hands in the fields, factories and construction sites." Farmers are reminded that his government had increased the price of wheat; that it had given money to the state government to help them.

If an area has an Ambedkar statue, Singh and his campaigners can be trusted to garland it, winning the hearts of the Dalits. It is a pious ritual that he performs unfailingly in every town. On one early morning he makes his way through the maze of narrow lanes in the heart of Bareilly town. The destination is the residence of Maulana Tausif Raza Khan, head of the Barillevi sect of Sunnis.

This is a locality with a mixed population. Seeing Singh walking through the labyrinth, Hindu shop-keepers try to needle him by loudly greeting each other with 'Ram Ram bhai' and 'Garv se kaho hum Hindu hai.' But Singh refused to look embarrassed. He merely hurries on.

While on his campaign he gives the distinct impression that he has little time and much to do. He almost races from place to place, but once he reaches there he does not leave till he has explained his two points: the masjid-mandir issue and Mandal.

And Singh never fails to react to a gathering. The convoy mostly made up of cars carrying media people stops at every roadside where there is a band of people waiting with welcome garlands. At times he leaves the car to address them; at other times he talks to them leaning out of the window. "I would like to stop but we are late for the next meeting," he would tell them and speed away.

At Bareilly, Mufti Muhammed Sayeed shares the platform with Singh. And from Lucknow he is joined by Ajit Singh. Sharad Yadav is expected but fails to make it. His car has broken down. Sharad Yadav is there in his elements at the last lap of the tour. He exudes confidence: "We will sweep UP and Bihar."

The Mufti has taken on the task of holding out an appeal to the Muslims. Though his Kashmiri accent draws comment from the Urdu-speaking populace, they are impressed by the way he recites the Koran. "Allah says he will help only those who make an effort to help themselves. It is said so in the Koran," he tells his audiences at Bareilly and Nawabganj urging the oppressed lot to fight for their rights.

And the Mufti is quite pleased with the effect. He finds that the Muslims are moving away from their traditional party. We have successfully given them the slogan of social justice and secularism."

Ajit Singh is vocal about the folly of having any electoral understanding with Mulayam Singh, while V.P. Singh has been maintaining a careful silence on it. And everywhere Ajit is voluble about the Janata Dal's plans for the farmers, who form his vote bank.

Singh and Ajit are the most sought-after in the convoy. Singh frequently changes cars and moves into the vehicle of the local MP [Member of Parliament] or MLA [Member of Legislative Assembly]. Kailash Nath Singh Yadav, the UP Janata Dal president, has a tough time keeping pace with him. Singh is on the road early in the morning and hits the sack well past midnight. "Since I have no regular meal time, it is OK," Singh says, his hand exploring a bag of *channa*(gram). During the barnstorming he prefers to stick to *channa* and boiled water—"if I get fruits and milk, it's a bonus."

Not that *channa* keeps from being invited to breakfast and dinner at his supporters' homes. He obliges them but often leaves within minutes, stuffing his pocket with oranges and sweets.

But what should be eating his mind is the absence of an effective organisation at the city and district levels. Welcome gates, banners and posters are missing. But Sharad Yadav is not worried: "We are a mass party. We don't need an organisation."

But this is obviously bothering Singh. At every meeting he makes an appeal that each supporter should mail ten postcards seeking votes for the Janata Dal. The response is mixed. Some tell him that they cannot think of ten people to write to. Others believe it is not necessary. Says Balbir Singh, a Pilibhit farmer: "The raja does not need this. Every poor man and every Muslim is going to vote for him."

V.P. Singh still loves dramatic dialogue with the crowds. He would ask a question and elicit an answer in unison—answers he likes to hear. Enthusiastic as he may sound, the crowds these days fail to respond with the same passion they had in 1989. "Will the congress win?" There is a no, but a feeble one. He urges them to roar full-throated and the response is better. "Will the Congress lose its deposit?" Again the reply is half-hearted. At the next meeting the charade is given the go-by.

Singh explains away the lack of ardour saying that the campaign will pick up only after the candidates are chosen. His publicity committee headed by Rajmohan Gandhi is getting ready for the show and two private companies have been commissioned to shoot two films on social equity and secularism. Slogans are being coined, posters and leaflets being prepared. The slogans of yore like *'Raja tum sangharsh karo hum tumhare saath hai'* and *'Raja nahin fakir hai, eh ki takhdeer hai'* have somehow lost their charm.

"It is toast without butter and tea with very little sugar for V.P. Singh," says Sudarshan Loyalka, national convener of the Nav Nirman Manch, to the catering man. V.P. Singh, immaculate in a white kurta-pyjama, has not had a moment to himself. The other VIP accompanying him in the AC chaircar of the Gujarat Express is Dal president S.R. Bommai. There is the usual sprinkling of autograph-hunters and others who raise questions. Singh, as is his wont, has a lot of explaining to do on various subjects. On Mandal, on social justice, on his party's direction and so on.

The first stop is a Valsad. The mercury has gone up to 40 degrees celsius though it is still only 9:30 in the morning. The welcome to Singh is also very warm. The streets are swarming with people and resounding with slogans of 'V.P. Singh zindabad' and *'desh ke neta V.P. Singh'* as the motorcade inches towards the circuit house.

The major pre-lunch event on Singh's agenda is a meeting at the Bai Avabai High School. The turnout of about 7,000 is fairly good in a town of 40,000 people. Valsad forms part of the tribal belt of south Gujarat where Singh and Mandal are understandably popular.

And it is a new V.P. Singh that rises to address them. Far more confident, a lot more earthy. And his language would do a hard-core leftist proud. He talks of exploitation, deprivation and social and economic equity. He explains his fight against the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Then comes the rhetorical question, "How can you distribute Ram or Rahim?" And the crowd responds with thunderous applause, drowning cries of protest by the few VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad] supporters.

Back at the circuit house, some student-supporters of the VHP chant *'V.P. Singh murdabad'* on being denied an encounter with him. Finally Loyalka arranges a meeting and the students clear their doubts. The angry young men return silently, a trifle overwhelmed.

On the way to Surat, Singh makes a few whistle-stops. The Dalits here are behind him. So too the Muslims and the backward classes. Even the illiterate villagers are aware of the campaign themes. The polarisation of voters is complete.

But Gujarat is believed to be a BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] basket, where the Dal is divided and weak. The party does not have all the infrastructure required to transform the V.P. Singh charisma into votes. But "those who had written off VP are in for a shock," claims a local leader.

The animosity against Singh's Mandalism is manifest as we approach Surat. At Navsari, a prominent portrait of his has a garland of chappals and he is greeted with shouts of *'Maulana V.P. Singh vapas jao'* (Maulana VP go back) and 'V.P. Singh chor hai.' At a public meeting in surat proper, a few hundred middle class youth chant *'jai Ram, jai siya Ram.'* But the crowd of 40,000 is too strong for them to disrupt the meeting.

Midway through his speech Singh pulls out his favourite anecdote about the buffalo and the brothers, which he has been spinning all over the places. Even the content of his speech rarely varies. "You hear him once and you heard it all," says a Dal leader.

Next morning Singh is perked up thanks to the sight of the Surat crowd. He appears quite at home on the tribal terrain of Bharuch district where the crowds have been waiting for hours showing their infinite patience. It is hot as hell—43 degrees celsius. Singh is at his histrionic best while plugging for the local candidates and all *bhai-bhandi* with local Harijan and tribal leaders on the dais.

The campaign wagon rolls on uneventfully till it reaches Vadodara (Baroda), a BJP bastion where a 20,000-strong crowd has gathered to hear the Mandal man. As Singh gets into his act and rips apart the BJP policies, VHP supporters let go a hail of stones. Singh, however, is unruffled; rather he is pleased in a masochist manner. "Did anybody get hurt?" he asks the journalists at the dinner after the stormy public meeting. "Each of those stones will get us a thousand votes," he observes. Hasan Kamal Maharashtra convener of the Nav Nirman Manch, is far more concerned. He talks of such resistance in other cities like Bhopal, where a few stones were thrown at a public meeting. The VP brigade also admits that there is an urban-rural division of votes. But "the people are with us," asserts Loyalka. Not everybody, however, is willing to believe him.

Singh does not betray any sign of distress over the thin crowds in the southern Karnataka districts of Mandya, Hassan and Chikmagalur. As he veers northwards and traverses Hubli, Dharwad, Raichur and Bellary, the turnout is decent, in some places huge, and the response positive. A Ramakrishna Hegde loyalist ascribes the better response to Hegde's charisma, which still seems to be intact despite the battering he has taken in recent years.

But the Hegde charisma failed to work last time, when the Congress(I) left just one of the 28 seats to the Janata Dal. And even that lone winner, Basavraj Patil who eventually sided with Chandra Shekhar, has now joined the Congress(I).

Last time Singh saw no earthly use of going hoarse in Karnataka, leaving the barnstorming to the local chieftains. Now he drives a hot and gruelling 2,000-km stretch over four frenetic days, addressing more than two dozen public meetings, waving to wayside crowds, contacting leaders of consequence and perfecting his strategies. This time he is keen to establish direct contact with his to-be-tested vote banks here.

Mysore. Milad Park Mundi Mohalla, a teeming Muslim locality. It is 10 p.m., time for them to be in bed to rise early and complete their chores by sun-up. For it is the fasting month of Ramzan. But on this night of 1 April people mill around, tinsel festoons of gold and silver glitter as they tremble in the rare summer night whiff. The crowd fills up the square, the three roads and the roof tops.

As the motorcade pulls up behind the rostrum two hours later, they jostle and elbow each other and crane their necks for a glimpse of the man who sacrificed his gaddi to save a masjid. Singh apologises profusely for troubling them during the *roza* (fasting) time. Hearts melt in admiration and the people surge forward. Mounted police move closer—it is a sensitive spot.

Singh builds up a tempo, and soon is into the most exciting part. The voice is modulated, the delivery theatrical. He says: *"Advani ne kaha, ya sarkar tootegi, ya tho masjid tootegi. Maine kaha, sarkar toot sakti hai, lekin masjid ko hum nahin tootne denge. Advani ko giraftar kiya aur sarkar gira."* He pauses. There is a deafening thunder of "Raja Vishwanath Pratap Singh Zindabad."

On the outskirts of Channagiri, a small town in Shimoga district, burkaclad women peer out of the door frames, some step out to glance at the masjid saviour. His Contessa halts at a pandal to repeat the masjid bit: "If I have to abdicate power a hundred times for protecting the masjid I would do it. Again and again." He strikes an unfailing emotional chord in them.

Jaffar Ahmed, who came from Chitradurga to see the new Muslim hope in flesh and blood, is overwhelmed. "We will surrender our wealth to him. Not just our votes," he says. The mood of the Muslims has sent the Congress(I) scurrying into strategy sessions, despatching its prominent Muslim leaders to districts to stem the tide.

Singh works up a relish when he takes on Rajiv Gandhi. "When the Lok Sabha debated the Mandal report, Rajiv Gandhi gulped one glass of water for each page. He drank so much of water than he can drown himself and his party in it." The joke jells.

In Davangere, where the crowds are just half the size of what Advani drew a fortnight earlier, Singh asks the people who are shifting their feet in the blistering heat: "Can you see the stars in this scorching sun?" After he demands and gets an answer, he delivers the punchline: "But Rajiv Gandhi is seeing stars in daylight. In UP, the Congress is third. In Bihar he has four out of 54 MPs. After the polls he can't even get four pall-bearers to carry the Congress corpse."

Often the pitch is much too contrived and the response constipated. "Will the Congress win or lose in Tamil Nadu," he asks the assemblage at Haveri in Dharwad district. *"Solu...solu,"* he tries the Kannada word for defeat. The crowd fails to catch on; the pronunciation is weird. But he eggs them on, he wants to hear them say *solu* in Karnataka, *solu* in the entire south. But the response is feeble; he insists on a louder cry. Satisfied finally with a higher decibel level, he smugly turns to journalists: "Now you have heard the people's verdict."

Spontaneity is sorely missing. Many of the voters are seeped in cynicism, and would watch the antics of the netas in silence. For them Singh is yet another enigma in their eventless world of impoverished existence. The leaders descend, speechify and zip off and the dramatics over, a pallid curtain of reality falls back in their lives.

But they do come alive when honest words stir their souls. In the steel town of Bhadravathi, Singh works just that magic while addressing a group composed of the working class and the minorities. He is at his poetic and spontaneous best: "Ram-Rahim dwells in the hearts of the poor, not in mandirs and masjids. Hanuman tore out his heart to show Ram is there. Can there be a greater Ram *bhakht* than Gandhiji who said 'He! Ram' while dying?" His voice quivers. "Gandhiji preached love. BJP is out to break hearts. How can we build a nation by breaking hearts?" he asks in a voice that is subdued with sadness.

As if struck by a sudden insight, he presents a philosophical counter to BJP's Hindutva. "I was also born into a Hindu family. My mother told me that *Atma* (soul) has no caste or religion. Can the BJP people say that they were not Muslims in their previous birth or that they won't be Muslims in their next birth?" A thoughtful hush falls over the audience as the simple logic sinks in.

But the next moment the wag in him is back with verve. "BJP promises you Ram. Rajiv goes one step further and offers you Ram from one pocket and Rahim from another. Fold your hands and tell them, keep your Ram to yourselves. Our Ram is in our hearts. Not in ballot boxes."

There is, however, one positive aspect to Singh's rhetoric. Since he covers parts of the saffron trail of Advani which put the fear of Ram into the people, they now have a chance to see the other side of the mandir issue. This had not been possible in the communally squally atmosphere in these parts where public debates on the issue were all muted.

Yet local Dal leaders are apprehensive of Singh overplaying the masjid issue. At Holehonnur in Shimoga, where Singh delivers a quickie to a predominantly Hindu crowd, translator J.H. Patel misses out on that bit about his readiness to sacrifice the gaddi for protecting a temple, church of gurdwara. Standing next to Singh on the tractor-trailer dais. Hegde shuffles behind Patel and whispers in his ear to add that part. Lest the people should think that Singh would sacrifice only for the sake of a mosque.

When it comes to the 'coalition' of the poor Singh has little to offer to the Dalits. All he can do is to remind them about Bharat Ratna to Ambedkar and the mounting of his portrait on the wall of Parliament's Central Hall. Dalits in Karnataka have little reason to warm up to Janata Dal. It was during the Dal rule that Dalits in Bendegere and Thothuru were forced to eat human excreta.

The backward classes and the Muslims have undoubtedly found a rallying point in Singh, in whom they have invested their aspirations and who they hope would take them to the promised land. But not many others believe that the Mandal-masjid combination would pitchfork him to power though Janata Dal kingdom in Bihar is unlikely to be shaken.

Everywhere else, in UP, Gujarat and Karnataka, his campaign has lacked punch, and the winning post appears far away. The knight of 1989 has lost his shining armour, the VP magic is missing. Only the shrill Mandal-mandir cry rings out in loud despair.

* Muslims Asked To Vote Janata Dal

* Imam's Request

91AS0979A Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 4 May 91 p 1

[Text] New Delhi, May 3—The Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid, Syed Abdullah Bukhari, today asked the Muslims to vote for the Janata Dal en bloc in the coming elections.

In constituencies where there were no Janata Dal candidates in the fray, he urged the electorate to support "secular and Left parties." He appealed to them not to allow their votes "to be divided and go to waste."

Making this announcement from the Jama Masjid, the Imam said "Wherever no secular candidates are available, you may throw away your vote into the dustbin, but do not cast any vote for the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party]."

Unimpressed by the Congress(I)'s election-eve promises, the Imam said 40 years of Congress rule was a "bitter experience for us. The Congress(I) has made some promises in its manifesto regarding the minorities. Could these promises not have been implemented in states where the Congress(I) was or is in power?" he asked.

The Imam told newsmen that he was backing the Janata Dal because the V.P. Singh government had tried to do something to alleviate the suffering of the people, including the Muslims. "In fact, Mr V.P. Singh had sacrificed his government for secular values," he added.

The Imam said the National Front government had provided a sense of security in the minorities and showed respect to Muslims in various ways. These included opening the doors of mosques under the National Archives, declaring a holiday on Id-e-Miladunnabi, and increase in compensation for riot victims, he pointed out.

Asked whether there was any "agreement" between him and Mr V.P. Singh, the Imam said "Everything is not revealed to the Press and the public." He refuted allegations that the Janata Dal had included many of his candidates in the party's list simply to win his approval. Maintaining that he had no hand in the preparation of the party list, the Imam added: "Our sole aim was to ensure that no divisive elements were included."

The Imam said his decision to support the Janata Dal should not be taken as a fatwa (religious decree)." It was his decision as a "sewak (servant)" of the people, he added. He said he supported the Mandal Commission's report and would like the Muslims to be included in it.

Charging the BJP with increasing communalism, the Imam said the Janata Dal leaders had assured him that they would not seek the support of the BJP under any circumstances. "I pray to the Almighty for a peaceful poll which will result in the emergence of secular, nationalist and democratic forces, capable of forming a stable government for the betterment and peace of the country," he said.

When it was pointed out that the Uttar Pradesh chief minister, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, had stood by the Muslims during the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's agitation for the Ram temple at Ayodhya, the Imam said, "We appreciate good work done by anybody." He, however, did not explain why Mr Yadav would not get his support.

Asked to predict the election results, the Imam said it was unlikely that any party would secure an absolute majority. Asked whether the Congress(I) would form a government in alliance with the Janata Dal, he said nothing could be ruled out in politics. He refused comment on the Indian Union Muslim League's decision to support the Congress(I) in Kerala and the decision of the Babri Masjid Action Committee leader, Mr Zafaryar Zilani, to stand by Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav.

* Encouragement to Communalism

91AS0979B Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 21 Apr 91 p 8

[Editorial: "Secularism and the Shahi Imam"]

[Text] It was announced with great fanfare that a high-powered team of the Janata Dal led by its president, Mr

S.R. Bommai, and which included, among others, such stalwarts like Mr Ajit Singh, met the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid, Syed Abdullah Bukhari and conveyed to him the message that the National Front would abide by the three conditions laid down by him in return for his support—implying the Muslim vote—in the elections. The three conditions put forward by the Imam are: representation to Muslims in Parliament and Assemblies in proportion to their population; Muslim candidates should be fielded from the Muslim-dominated areas; and Muslim candidates should enjoy the support and be able to espouse the cause of their community. These demands eminently match the perception of Mr Vishwanath Pratap Singh who sees India in terms of castes and religious communities. He believes in consolidating these divisions rather than ensuring their gradual disappearance. The acceptance of the demands put forward by the Shahi Imam would legitimise religious divisions. If in a Muslim-dominated constituency only a Muslim candidate can contest, then it will not be long before the argument is put forward that from Hindu-dominated constituencies only Hindu candidates can contest. And it will not stop at this. There will soon be further divisions and classifications on the basis of castes: Yadav candidates for Yadav-dominated constituencies, Jat [farming caste] candidates for Jat-dominated constituencies and so on. If the National Front wins, the Shahi Imam will naturally demand that a legal cover be put on the conditions agreed upon by it. The third condition, namely that "Muslim candidates should enjoy the support and be able to espouse the cause of the community," is most significant. Who will decide that a particular Muslim candidate satisfies this condition? Obviously, the Shahi Imam, because the National Front has implicitly accepted the notion that the Imam knows best the interests of the Muslims. And it is precisely this Shahi Imam who, as a leader of the Babri Masjid Action Committee, had delivered a speech at the Boat Club lawns, filled with communal invectives. Such is the reputation of the Shahi Imam that the authorities prevent him from visiting the site of communal riots, as it is believed that his visits would only add fuel to the fire.

It is a well established fact that a written agreement has an unwritten part to it also. The unwritten aspect of Mr V.P. Singh's agreement with the Shahi Imam is not known. As if to reinforce the pact with Imam Bukhari, the Janata Dal would also be taking Syed Shahabuddin into its fold. And Mr Shahabuddin's credentials are well-known. In fact, the Shahi Imam and Syed Shahabuddin are the two most prominent symbols of Muslim communalism in India. It is argued that there is nothing wrong in accepting the Shahi Imam's conditions as Indira Gandhi did the same thing in 1979. But two wrongs do not make a right. Also, the communal situation in 1979 was not as acute as it is today. Besides, given the level of Hindu sensitivity today, it is likely to produce a communal reaction among them. In fact, the National Front could not have offered a better gift to the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] than its well-publicised acceptance of the Imam's conditions. Whatever may have been the case in the past, today secularism will not be safe if it has the Shahi Imam as an ally. Secularists have in the past displayed an understanding for minority communalism on the basis that the real threat to secularism comes from majority communalism. But what was ignored is the fact that flirtation with minority communalism feeds majority communalism. Moreover, in certain situations, minority communalism can also develop fascist tendencies. This has happened in the case of Sikh communalism. And as history has shown, the minority communalism of the Jews acquired a fascist character in the state of Israel.

* Janata Dal Seen 'Poor Fourth' in U.P.

91AS0951D Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 8 May 91 p 1

[Article by Sajeda Momin]

[Text] Lucknow, May 7—The Janata Dal [JD] which managed to take 54 of the 85 Lok Sabha seats of Uttar Pradesh [UP] in the strong anti-Congress wave that swept north India in 1989, is in troubled waters now.

The random distribution of tickets, often superseding the claims of loyalists, has caused a lot of resentment in the party rank and file. Many workers and staunch supporters, disillusioned with the chaos in the party organisation, are refusing to actively campaign for the party.

Party workers feel that the candidates who have been selected are mostly non-entities and cannot instil any confidence in the supporters. They allege that the selection was left at the hands of a couple of state leaders who took arbitrary decisions and ignored many worthy aspirants. The leaders have chosen candidates who have no standing or following.

The party is now feeling the pinch of the lack of proper organisational infrastructure. No district-level units have been formed and there is virtually no one to coordinate the workers. The party has not set up offices in many areas and the party office here is perpetually empty even now that all political parties have started campaigning in full swing.

The Dal fares a poor fourth in the race for posters, banners and bantings and is even behind the Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP). Party flags and huge wheels which were seen all over the city last time are absent now. The lack of funds is one of the party's excuses for this low-key campaign. The nominees are apparently financing their own campaigns and those unable to do so are not being helped by the party in any way.

A senior party leader confirms that this general lack of interest is because most party workers are unhappy over the distribution of tickets and selection of candidates. Moreover, he says, the Janata Dal is not prepared for

elections now and has not been able to rouse itself up to activity. The party office here still does not have the final list.

All these factors are creating grave problems for the Dal, which, unless it comes up with some quick thinking, is likely to face the same rout as the Congress(I) in 1989.

Mr V.P. Singh, the "raja of Mandal," and the main vote-catcher of the party, also seemed to have lost some of his appeal and is not being able to rouse the same sort of enthusiasm as last time. The party now no longer focuses only on the raja but also highlights the Jat leader, Mr Ajit Singh.

The Janata Dal is clearly in deep trouble in a state from where it had hoped to come off with flying colours. And it is not necessarily due to loss of support among the masses but because of some grave mistakes of its own leaders.

* CPI Participation in Elections Cited

* Decline in Lok Sabha

91AS0976A Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 30 Apr 91 p 8

[Editorial: "Power Brokers Capture CPI"]

[Text] After the split in the undivided Communist Party, the CPI [Communist Party of India], has started growing fast in the Hindi heartland, particularly Bihar. The secret of the party's growth was the leadership provided by its former general secretary, Mr C. Rajeswara Rao. He belonged to the old guard and had the strong stamp of the national movement on him. He was self-effacing and was not corrupted by parliamentarianism in the sense that being an MP [member of Parliament] was not all important to him. His greatest contribution to the CPI was that he set the party to organise agricultural labourers. Historically, the Communists were strong among farmers who before the land reforms were sharecroppers and tenants. After they got land under various schemes, attention needed to be turned to the most oppressed sections in rural areas, namely, agricultural labourers, who were mostly Harijans. The CPI set up a separate class organisation of agricultural labourers which started growing particularly rapidly in Bihar. It is true that its support to the Emergency retarded somewhat the growth of the CPI in Bihar. Yet the rural poor, particularly agricultural labourers, had started looking to the CPI as their own party. It was such a party which Mr Rajeswara Rao handed down to his successors. But within a short time, these unworthy successors have made a hash of the CPI particularly in Bihar. The most serious damage that the present leadership has done to its base in Bihar is its blind acceptance of the Mandal Commission report. The CPI national council had rejected the Mandal recommendations in 1982 and only reluctantly supported the Karpoori Thakur formula. The CPI's tailism of Mr Vishwanath Pratap Singh has gone much further than that of the CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist], which still talks of the Karpoori Thakur formula. The CPI support to the Mandal Commission is total. The party has thus bid goodbye to its class-based approach and adopted a caste-based approach as its basic ideology, which is indistinguishable from that of the worst casteists. As a result, its support base has started eroding. A large number of CPI workers, including, among others, Mr Ramesh Prasad Sinha, MLC [member of Legislative Council], left the party protesting against the blind support to Mandal. At a recent conference of the CPI-controlled All-India Students' Federation at Bokaro, the party leadership was lambasted for supporting the caste-based reservation policy. The CPI is now associated with land-owning backward castes who are the most ruthless oppressors of agricultural labourers and Harijans. As a result, the CPI is losing its support among most oppressed sections of the population. In one year, the party membership in Bihar has fallen from 1,16,433 to about 1,00,000. [as published]

But the worst blow which the leadership delivered to the party was its concession of the Patna seat to the Janata Dal. The CPI has won the Patna parliamentary seat thrice in the past. A political base in a state capital always imparts prestige to any party. Understandably this has caused a revolt in the local unit of the CPI. Mr Ramnath Yadav, who was earlier being considered as the party candidate, initially refused to obey the leadership and finally withdrew from the contest only at the last minute. He had already started his election campaign and a large number of party workers had begun working for him. Now, as if to rub salt on their wound, the Bihar CPI workers are being asked to support Mr Inder Kumar Gujral of the Janata Dal in Patna. In 1989, Mr Gujral had won from Punjab and, according to veteran CPI leader Satyapal Dang, had even received the support of a section of terrorists. Now, when the Janata Dal has wholeheartedly supported the holding of elections in Punjab, Mr Gujral has come running to Patna. And to fit him in the casteist mould of politics, Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav has said that Mr Gujral is in fact a Gujjar, a backward caste. But Mr Gujral actually belongs to an upper caste. From the CPI point of view, what is worse is that it has not been compensated for surrendering the Patna seat. The party is now contesting only eight seats, the lowest number since 1967. The CPI has not only thrown away its political and ideological soul, but also accepted its fate of a not-so-slow liquidation as the price of its alliance with the casteist Janata Dal. Perhaps, all this has been done because the power brokers who now lead the party have been promised an odd seat here and a nomination to the Rajya Sabha there.

* Part of Local Contests

91AS0976B New Delhi PATRIOT in English 5 May 91 p 1

[Article by Shameem Faizee: "CPI To Contest 164 Assembly Seats"]

[Text] The Communist Party of India (CPI) has released a list of 164 candidates for eight State assemblies. In Kerala, the party has dropped two ministers of the LDF

[Left Democratic Front] Government and changed one candidate in West Bengal.

The party is contesting 24 seats in Kerala, 12 in West Bengal, 42 in UP [Uttar Pradesh], five in Haryana, three in Pondicherry, 39 in Assam and 10 in Tamilnadu.

The party is part of the Left Democratic Front in Kerala and the Left Front in West Bengal. In Pondicherry, it has seat adjustment with the DMK [Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam] and in Uttar Pradesh 12 out of 42 seats are adjusted with the Janata Dal [JD].

In Kerala, the party has introduced eight new faces, including three candidates who unsuccessfully contested the last Lok Sabha elections. Mr N. Rajan, who was the party nominee from Adoor last time, has been given the sure seat of Kilimanoor. Prof Meenakshi Thampan is contesting from Kodungalloor and M. Rehmatullah from Thirurangadi.

The two Ministers not contesting the poll are Food and Civil Supplies Minister E. Chandrashekheran Nair, and Minister for Social Development R.K. Raghavan. Mr Nair has been replaced in Chadayamangalam by Mr E. Rajendran, who incidentally is his younger brother but a party leader in his own right. Mr Raghavan has been replaced by Mr K.P. Sreedharan in Vaikom (SC) [Scheduled Caste].

In West Bengal, the CPI had contested 12 seats last time and lost only in Sealdah. The defeated candidate Nandgopal Bhattacharya is now the secretary of the CPI State Council. He has been replaced by Ms Ila Mitra. The Danton Assembly seat was won by State Minister Kanai Bhowmik, who died a few years ago. Mr Ranjit Patra has been nominated from this constituency.

In Uttar Pradesh, where the CPI is contesting 10 reserved seats, all the six sitting MLAs [member of Legislative Assembly] have been retained. The party has fielded Mr N.D. Sundriyal, secretary of its international department, from Lansdown in the Garhwal region. He is the third National Council member in the fray apart from leader of the party group in the Assembly Ram Chander Singh and Udal, who are contesting from Nawabganj and Kolasla in Varanasi respectively.

In Haryana, the party has fielded five candidates, including the lone sitting MLA Dr Harnam Singh from Shahabad. Mr Harnam Singh and his wife were recently presented the Shaurya Veer award for their daring resistance to Khalistani terrorists. In a scuffle with them two years ago they lost their son and daughter-in-law.

The CPI has rejected the seat sharing arrangement with the ID [expansion not given] and the Haryana Vikas Party [HVP] of Mr Bansilal. It may be recalled that the JD-HVP had left five seats for the Left parties. But four were cornered by the CPI-M [Communist Party of India-Marxist] and the CPI was asked to be content with Shahabad. The party has described this as "being the back dealing" and rejected it.

* Harijan Role in National Polls Analyzed

91AS0969A Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 7, 8 May 91

[Article by D.P. Kumar]

[7 May 91 pp 1, 7]

[Text] New Delhi, 6 May—The Scheduled Castes, which comprise nearly 16 percent of the total electorate, are potentially more important than the Muslim vote bank. Past elections show that the Scheduled Castes (commonly, though erroneously, referred to as "Harijans") have remained solidly with the Congress, except for slight deviations, such as their support for the Republican Party, which is limited to Maharashtra, and the now-emerging Bahujan Samaj Party. The Congress has all along heavily depended on the "Harijan vote" to rule at the Centre and in the States.

On the other hand, Muslim voters have shown signs of moving away from the Congress ever since 1971 when Mrs. Indira Gandhi helped liberate Bangladesh, thereby dividing Pakistan. Large sections of the Muslims did not vote for the Congress in the 1977 elections because of the family planning measures pushed through during the Emergency. Thereafter, in successive elections, Muslim support for the party has further dwindled.

But the Harijans have stood steadfast by the Congress, voting almost en bloc for the party. This is because Mahatma Gandhi gave the pride of place to Harijans and coined the word to denote the "outcasts" and the "untouchables" as "sons of God." The Mahatma was fond of saying that the day the lowest of the low was put on the highest seat in independent India, his "Ramrajya" would be realized. To identify himself with the Harijans, he would often live in "bhangi" colonies.

Things have, however, been changing slowly and imperceptibly. New leaders have come up even in the Congress, who have begun speaking differently. "We are the poorest and that is probably why we are more emotional. Our attachment to the Congress has been total and unconditional. When 'Indira amma' died, we voted for the Congress en bloc. But then, it is now forgotten that our attachment to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has also been there from the very beginning," they say.

For these leaders, it is the Janata Dal which, for the first time, gave due recognition to Dr. Ambedkar, who had for long been derogatorily referred to as a "stooge of the British." His detractors have criticized his not resigning from the Central Executive Council, even after "Bapuji,-" M.S. Aney and other Indian members quit after Gandhi went on [a] fast in 1947 at Ahmednagar.

Harijan leaders in the Congress, who are thinking anew, say that it is only now that Dr. Ambedkar has been placed on a high pedestal. These leaders also point out that it was Mr. V.P. Singh who declared Babasaheb's birthday as a national holiday, awarded him the Bharat Ratna, ordered his portrait to be put up among the galaxy of national leaders in the Central Hall of Parliament and arranged for a year-long birth anniversary celebration. "Our (Congress) leaders have now understood that if they do not recognize Babasaheb Ambedkar's contribution, they will not get the votes of the Harijans. So they have started speaking from all the centenary celebration platforms. Till yesterday, they did not bother to talk about Babasaheb, who has now become a big factor in the coming election."

It is this new consciousness about Babasaheb that erupted into a major demonstration at Raj Ghat on his birth anniversary. Young enthusiasts shouted slogans, saying: "It was Gandhi who brought us up from below, but it was Babasaheb who made us sit by you and gave us equal rights." The reference was to the reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Parliament and Assemblies, as also in jobs, universities, colleges and schools, which were enshrined in the Constitution as a result of the efforts of Dr. Ambedkar.

Thus, it is argued, the voting pattern among the Harijans in the coming election will be in favour of Babasaheb Ambedkar "Whether I like it or not, in this election it is Mr. V.P. Singh who will get all the emotional votes of the Harijans. The Congress(I) never uttered the name of Dr. Ambedkar before. It is doing so now after Mr. V.P. Singh started it. On 14 April, Dr. Ambedkar's birthday, when Mr. Chandra Shekhar garlanded the statue on Parliament House lawns, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi did not attend the function. In 1988, as Prime Minister, Mr. Gandhi did attend the function. But he did not do so in 1989, 1990 and 1991. The masses have noted it; they will not vote for the Congress," said one leader.

Aware of the numerical strength of this constituency, the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] is also seeking to spread its influence among the Harijans. It began praising Babasaheb Ambedkar from 1980, and the Harijans have taken note of the fact that the BJP has been prominently displaying portraits of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay and Dr. Ambedkar at its conferences. "The Congress(I)'s sessions display portraits of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mrs. Indira Gandhi. The Scheduled Castes are really against Mahatma Gandhi. They say that whatever he did was for political gain, whereas Babasaheb Ambedkar fought against him because Gandhi wanted to black out the interests of the Scheduled Castes. Right or wrong, in the minds of the masses, this image of Gandhi is slowly gaining ground. They are for Ambedkar. Gandhi did not allow Ambedkar to come up on the political scene; Gandhi only wanted to exploit us. He set up the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Why did he seek to differentiate us from the savarna people? Our people do not like the word Harijan. Scratch a Scheduled Caste man a little, and he will speak up against Gandhi and in favour of Ambedkar. I am not speaking of the pseudo-Gandhians like Mr. Buta Singh or Mr. Shankaranand who are the wrong people to speak for the interests of the Scheduled Castes. Others in the Congress(I) are now going to speak up openly," explained another leader.

Undoubtedly, these are the sentiments of the younger people belonging to the Scheduled Castes, particularly those who have come out of universities, colleges and schools. Many of them are still aligned with the Congress(I), but slowly their perceptions are changing. The bulk of the Harijans would still probably go with the Congress(I) because of the Harijan uplift movement that Gandhi began after coming to India. At that time they were emotionally attached to the Congress, as they continued to be after Independence, since it was the Congress Government which extended reservations to members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Later, after Dr. Ambedkar took to Buddhism, the neo-Buddhists followed him, although his influence at this stage was limited to the Mahar community. Many of the neo-Buddhists, like Buddha Priya Maurya, travelled back to Congress later.

The Republican Party of India was a subsequent growth and was restricted in its influence mainly in Maharashtra. It has always won a limited number of seats in the Assembly and to the Lok Sabha.

Jagjivan Ram, who had emerged as the redoubtable all-India Harijan leader and was the second-in-command in successive Governments, has not had a lasting influence, especially in Bihar, the land of his birth, and some parts of Uttar Pradesh, where Harijans were prevented from casting their votes by Thakurs. In these places, they gradually came under Naxalite influence and have slowly moved towards the Indian People's Front.

[8 May 91 pp 1, 7]

[Text] New Delhi, 7 May—The Congress(I)'s monopoly over Harijan votes will be considerably eroded in the coming poll. Though the extent to which it will depreciate cannot be quantified, it is certain to harm the party's electoral prospects.

Besides the Congress(I), there are other parties which are vying for the Scheduled Castes vote—two of them, the Janata Dal and the Bahujan Samaj Party [BSP], rather seriously, as also the Bharatiya Janata Party. The BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] leader, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, recently visited Mhow in Madhya Pradesh, the birth-place of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, to lay the foundation of a Rs.[rupees]1.5-crore monument in honour of the Dalit leader in the presence of a Harijan gathering that reportedly dwarfed a rival Congress(I) rally, presided over by Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, a kilometre away.

However, the real threat is from the Janata Dal, led by Mr. V.P. Singh, and the BSP, led by Mr. Kanshi Ram.

Mr. Ram Dhan's Rashtriya Jan Morcha is also gearing itself to secure a slice of the Harijan votes in Uttar Pradesh.

Mr. V.P. Singh has extended his promise to implement the Mandal report to the Harijans and Muslims, saying that they too should get "social justice" because together they form the lower strata of society. This strategy has attracted the Muslims in a big way and also the Harijans. The Janata Dal, it is believed, will take away around 25 percent of the Harijan votes. The Janata Dal leaders claim it could be as much as 50 percent in the most populous tracts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

The BSP also has reportedly made big inroads into the Congress(I)'s Harijan vote bank in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, and also to some extent in Bihar. In Uttar Pradesh, the Chief Minister, Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, tried to negotiate a deal with Mr. Kanshi Ram till the last moment to avoid a division in the backward caste-Muslim-Harijan vote. But this did not come through. The Congress(I) is taking cold comfort in the possibility of the Jan Morcha taking away a chunk of Harijan votes from Janata Dal.

What all this means is that the Congress(I)'s total hold over Harijan votes has been broken, perhaps for the first time. In 1977, the Harijans stood by the party; in the last election, too, they voted for the Congress(I). But since then disenchantment has set in and the Janata Dal has emerged as a strong contender.

There is increasing rivalry between the Janata Dal and the BSP to secure the votes of the Harijans, backward communities and Muslims. The BSP's slogan is "economic emancipation and social change for the poor and the downtrodden." Mr. V.P. Singh, too, in his election campaign, though not making any direct or sectional appeal to the Harijans, has been seeking the support of "all the backward and downtrodden people." This may cause a split in the vote, but the Congress(I) will not necessarily emerge the beneficiary.

Mr. Kanshi Ram now says that the Janata Dal is "the biggest enemy" of his party because it is trying to "divide and mislead the poor and the downtrodden through the hollow slogan of restructuring society." He has been saying that during his 11-month rule, Mr. V.P. Singh did absolutely nothing for the Scheduled Castes. "But once he was out of power, he started talking about the welfare of the poor and the downtrodden." According to him, there will be a trifurcation of votes between the BJP, the Janata Dal and the Samajwadi Janata Party in Uttar Pradesh, and that this will work to the advantage of his party.

To show that he is really aiming high, Mr. Kanshi Ram's party will contest 270 Lok Sabha seats and 850 Assembly seats in the country. In Uttar Pradesh, it has put up candidates in 70 of the 85 Lok Sabha constituencies and 400 of the 425 Assembly constituencies. The BSP will contest about 20 Lok Sabha seats each from Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, 37 from West Bengal, 39 from Andhra Pradesh and 35 from Maharashtra, besides all seven from Delhi. In West Bengal, it is contesting 230 Assembly seats. In Punjab, it will contest all the 117 Assembly and 13 Lok Sabha seats, while in neighbouring Haryana it has put up candidates in 25 of the 90 Assembly constituencies. Mr. Kanshi Ram is contesting the East Delhi constituency where he is pitted against Mr. H.K.L. Bhagat, a Congress(I) stalwart.

Mr. Kanshi Ram is enthusiastic about his party's prospects and is possibly the only leader who believes in gaining from multilateral contests. "If in this split of votes we do not win, then when are we going to win?" he asks. He is confident that the BSP, which had won three Lok Sabha seats last time, will win at least 30 seats in the coming poll. He expects to double the BSP's share of the votes to 11 percent.

Broadly speaking, the Janata Dal is sure to cut deeply into Harijan votes in Bihar. The Indian People's Front will also take away a slice, and so will the BSP. It is said the Bihar picture is more or less clear, showing that the Janata Dal is going to carry the day. In the distribution of tickets for the eight reserved seats in Bihar, the Congress(I) has given nominations to only two Paswan candidates, the Paswan votes constituting almost 10 percent or half of Bihar's 21 percent Harijans. Traditionally the Paswans have always been given five tickets by the Congress(I). This has caused some ire among the Paswan Harijans, known to be a militant community.

The numerical strength of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is the highest in Madhya Pradesh, where they comprise 40 percent of the population. The BJP being the only other party of consequence in Madhya Pradesh with marginal influence on the Harijans, the Congress(I) will get the bulk of these votes in the State. In Punjab, the percentage of Harijans, including Mazhabi Sikhs, is 27, in Haryana and West Bengal 24, in Uttar Pradesh 22 and in Bihar 21. In Punjab, if the Harijans are allowed to vote, the bulk of the votes will go to the BSP. In Uttar Pradesh, the Harijan vote will be divided between the Janata Dal and the BSP. In eastern Uttar Pradesh, the Janata Dal has a more sound base. The Koeris, Kurmis, Yadavs, Lodhs, Mallahs and Gujars, and the lower backward castes like Nais (barbers) and Dhobis will go with Mr. V.P. Singh.

That the Janata Dal influence over Harijan votes will not be total is evident from the way it has handled the distribution of nominations. Its list of Lok Sabha candidates has been strongly criticized by Mr. Ram Dhan, himself a Harijan leader. Mr. Ram Dhan has asked Mr. V.P. Singh why Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan, a former Union Minister and one of those who influenced the decision to accept the Mandal report, and whose name figures in the Guinness Book for scoring the largest number of votes, was allowed to "run away" from his Hajipur constituency to Rosera. Mr. Ram Dhan has accused Mr. Paswan and Mr. Lallu Prasad Yadav, the Bihar Chief Minister, of striking a deal to oust the veteran Scheduled Caste

leader, Mr. Ram Sundar Das, who has a clean image and a Socialist background, from Bihar politics.

Mr. Ram Dhan is also disturbed by the "naked casteist character of the Janata Dal's candidates." According to him, "The list is full of Yadavs, Rajputs and Paswans. The interests of Chamars, Balmiks and Dhobis, who belong to Scheduled Castes, has been sacrificed, because of the anti-Chamar attitude of Mr. Paswan. Only one Chamar has been nominated by the Janata Dal, although the Chamars constitute the bulk of the Scheduled Caste population in the country."

The Janata Dal's patronization of the backward castes, Muslims and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will stand in good stead its candidates, who are fewer in number in southern India, but it will help immensely the Janata Dal's allies, such as the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh and the DMK [Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam] in Tamil Nadu. In Karnataka, the Janata Dal itself is present in a big way and it will divide the Harijan votes with the Congress(I). In Kerala, the Scheduled Castes will go the traditional way and on similar party lines as before. In Maharashtra too, as before, it is the Republican Party of India that will again retain its position as against the Congress(I). Various factions of the RPI [Republican Party of India] have forged alliances with major political parties in the State, which might result in a division of Scheduled Caste votes in next month's Lok Sabha election.

* BJP Seen Surging in Orissa

91AS0948A Madras THE HINDU in English
11 May 91 p 10

["BJP May Spring a Surprise in Orissa"; THE HINDU headline]

[Excerpts] With just a fortnight left for the polls for the 21 Lok Sabha seats in Orissa, the picture is still not clear which party has been able to take the upperhand and win people's confidence. However, there is a clear indication on visits to various constituencies that the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] condidates' influence among the people has increased manifold.

The BJP, which fielded six candidates in the 1989 elections and forfeited deposits [lost] in all six, is likely to surprise political analysts during thecoming polls. The party, which has set up candidates in all the 21 Lok Sabha seats, is not only expected to win a few seats, but may also end up a close second in many of the seats.

The growing influence of the BJP candidates is not only being felt in the coastal districts but also in western and southern Orissa. [passage omitted]

In the town areas like Nowrangpur and Malkangiri, one finds a strong feeling among the people to give the BJP candidates a try this time. In the neighboring Koraput constituency, one senses the growing popularity of the BJP candidates. The state Congress (I) president, Mr. Giridhar Gomango, who has been winning from Koraput since 1971, is finding the going rough this time. [passage omitted]

* BJP Surge in Orissa Seen at Expense of JD

91AS0951C Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English
6 May 91 p 6

[Article by S.P. Nanda: "BJP Gains on Dal's Failures"]

[Text] Defying all speculations and calculations, the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] has emerged a force to reckon with in Orissa. The party had not only drawn a blank in 1989, when it contested six seats from Orissa, its nominees had also lost their deposits in each of these constituencies.

Whether it is in the coastal belt, the western region, or the traditional Congress(I) stronghold of southern Orissa, the voter has begun thinking of the BJP as an alternative to the Janata Dal [JD] and the Congress(I). The BJP has, for the first time, fielded its nominees in all the 21 Lok Sabha seats in the state. The party has also started its campaign in most constituencies, far ahead of its rivals.

The popular response in the BJP's favour is indeed much beyond the expectation of the party's rank and file itself. It had barely hoped to win a couple of seats and had settled down for popularising its lotus symbol in the rest. But now it seems if the people, who are speaking favourably of the BJP, really decide to vote for the party, it might well come out with a stunning tally of about five seats—Kalahandi, Bolangir, Deogarh, Sundargarh and Sambalpur—all close to the Madhya Pradesh border.

Even in the constituencies of Nowrangpur, Berhampur and Aska in the south and Bhubaneswar, the BJP is perceived to be a strong contender. A striking feature in the state's poll scenario is the growing inclination of a considerable section of the young and the educated towards the BJP. It was primarily the spontaneous support of this section of the electorate that spurred the Janata Dal to victory in 1989.

As a prominent Janata Dal youth leader in Kendrapara pointed out, the publicity the BJP has been getting following Mr L.K. Advani's rathyatra, along with the recent entry of several film and cricket stars, former civil, police and military officials into the party, had had its impact among young and educated voters. The Congress(I) candidate in Kendrapara, Mr Bhagabat Prasad Mohanty, gladly claimed, "The Janata Dal is disappearing" (from the scene), while lamenting the emergence of the rightist and communal forces. Though the BJP lacks a strong organisation in Kendrapara, the people's increasing preference for it has been a matter of concern for both the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal.

The tribals and Harijans in western and southern Orissa and the farmers and Brahmins in the coastal area who speak appreciatively of the BJP, do not agree with the

party's stand on the Ram Mandir issue, but they do consider it an effective alternative to the Dal and the Congress(I). In fact, the people who are now disillusioned with the Dal but are not willing to accept the Congress(I), are increasingly willing to give the BJP, a chance at the Centre. Also, most of the BJP candidates are new faces, unlike their Dal and Congress(I) counterparts.

The surprising pace at which the BJP has gained ground in the state clearly suggests that the party would have overtaken the Dal and the Congress(I) had it built up a wider organisational base. Even the fragmented organisation it now has is riven with factionalism, particularly along the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh] versus non-RSS lines. But the people, who appear to be favourably disposed towards the party, seem to be unaware of its limitations.

An additional factor that has contributed to the growth of support for the BJP is the recent communal riots at Bhadrak and Soro, on which Hindu fundamentalists successfully launched a disinformation campaign. Though an overwhelming majority of the persons killed in the riots were Muslims, an impression that the Hindus were the worst sufferers is still prevalent.

In the absence of the 1989 Janata Dal wave, the question now is which party—the Congress(I) or the BJP—will bag a majority of the floating votes which had gone in the Dal's favour last time. Observers feel the BJP will only gain in a very few seats where it has a reasonable organisational set-up and strong candidates. In the rest of the constituencies, the Congress(I) is likely to benefit. Poll watchers also argue that many voters, who are now speaking in the BJP's favour, may finally choose the Congress(I) on the considerations of stability.

*** Reportage on BJP Prospects, Campaign**

* Advani on Coalition

91AS0980A Madras THE HINDU in English 19 May 91 p 6

[Text] New Delhi, May 18—The Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] leader, Mr. L.K. Advani, told presspersons here today that his party would emerge the single largest in the coming poll and independently form a Government at the Centre. But it would also consider formation of a coalition Government in case there was no clear verdict.

When asked which parties he would have in the coalition he said the party's decision would depend on many imponderables difficult to predict now. However, there could be no coalition either with the Congress(I) or the Left parties, he clarified.

He said his party would outstrip both the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal in the ensuing poll. And all that remained to be seen was whether it would secure an absolute majority or emerge the single largest. According to Mr. Advani's personal assessment "the BJP will make spectacular gains as it would improve its position in all the States."

He said the enthusiastic response he received during his recent visit to Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Orissa, considered out of the BJP's sphere of influence, had made him optimistic that the next Lok Sabha would not be a hung one.

Mr. Advani sees a large section of the electorate impressed by the BJP's sustained campaign against "pseudo-secularism," and its stand on Ayodhya, Article 370, uniform civil code, Human Rights Commission, economic liberalisation, small States and enhancing of the income tax exemption limit.

Asked to comment on the just released poll surveys which all place the BJP at second position, Mr. Advani said: "Some of these opinion polls are just the opinions of good and bad journalists." Having realised the futility of these polls France has banned them, he added.

Asked if his party would consider banning these polls, if it came to power, Mr Advani said he was not thinking in that direction. But indicated that the time for releasing the results of the poll was certainly disturbing as it might affect the voting pattern.

Netaji's niece joins party: A retired army officer, a film producer and a niece of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose today joined the BJP.

The party vice-president, Mr. K.R. Malkani introduced Ms Lalita Bose, niece of Netaji at a press conference. But the two others were not present.

Mr. Malkani said Lt. General (retd) B.K. Tiwari, former Director General of Armed Forces Medical Services and Mr. Devi Shamra, producer of films like Ganga Ki Lahren and Gunahon Ka Davta had also joined the party.

* Retired Bureaucrat Members

91AS0980B Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 25 Apr 91 p 1

[Article by Manini Chatterjee: "Influx of Top Ex-IAS, IPS Men Boon for BJP"]

[Text] New Delhi, April 24—The recent influx of retired bureaucrats, police officers and military men into the ranks of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] has not only helped the party acquire a much sought after "respectability" in the eyes of the urban middle class but may also serve as a signal to the administration to work in favour of the party in the coming elections, it is feared.

Almost every day, some retired mandarin is introduced to the Press by beaming BJP leaders who hold forth on why they have joined the only "disciplined and nationalist" party in the country. Apart from the high-profile former Comptroller and auditor general, Mr T.N.

Chaturvedi, there have been a spate of entries in different states, most of whom have been rewarded with Lok Sabha tickets. Mr Chaturvedi will contest the Kannauj seat in the heart of Uttar Pradesh.

Since the BJP is woefully short of suitable candidates to contest as many as 450 seats in the country, most new entrants have been given tickets. Sadhus and actors apart, the Army and administration have proved the best recruiting ground. Two Army generals—Lt. Gen. M.L. Yadav and Maj. Gen. Khandoori—have been fielded from Mahendragarh in Haryana and Garhwal in Uttar Pradesh respectively. Maj. Gen. Suri, who joined the party earlier this week, was perhaps a trifle too late to get a ticket.

Similarly, Mr Brajesh Mishra, a former IFS [Indian Foreign Service] officer who served as charge d'affaires in China, among other major assignments, joined today after the list of all 40 candidates in Madhya Pradesh has already been declared. The diplomat, who retired in 1987, is the son of the former Madhya Pradesh chief minister and Congress stalwart, D.P. Mishra.

The former chief secretary of Maharashra, Mr P.G. Gavai, is another candidate while the tradition of Madhya Pradesh mandarins joining either the Congress or the BJP is still going strong with a couple of senior IAS [indian Administrative Service] men in the BJP list. The politisation of the "iron frame of India" has reached down south with a number of police officers and bureaucrats entering the saffron fold in Andhra Pradesh.

Policemen crucial: But more than the IAS officers, it is the retired IPS men who will play a greater role in the elections itself. In Uttar Pradesh, two former director-generals of police, Mr S.C. Dikshit and Mr B.P. Singhal, are in the contest. Mr Dikshit, as vice-president of the VHP [Visha Hindu Parishad], is learnt to have played a crucial role in the siege on Ayodhya on October 30, thanks to his information network and the hold he had over the local police force. He is contesting from Varanasi. Mr B.P. Singhal, brother of VHP chief Ashok Singhal, is contesting the communally sensitive Moradabad.

In Andhra Pradesh, Mr D. Appa Rao, former director of police communications, and Mr Vijaya Rangan Naidu, former director of the anti-corruption bureau, have recently joined the BJP. Their services and contacts could prove useful to build the party image in the state.

RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh] infiltration: Though most of the new entrants claim that they have had nothing to do with the BJP and have been impressed by the party in recent years, it is well known that the RSS has many members and sympathisers in various echelons of the bureaucracy. These members, who have so far refrained from making their inclinations public, are today much more open because the BJP has emerged as a major party.

The fear is that many of the closet RSS men will help the BJP actively in the coming elections, particularly when they see their ex-bosses fighting on behalf of the party. Ordinary policemen, clerks and sundry officials who are considered to be actively anti-Mandal may play a tacit but important role in helping the party.

* Retired Gen, Minister's Wife

91AS0980C Madras THE HINDU in English 7 May 91 p 9

[Text] New Delhi, May 6—The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has welcomed the decision of Lt. Gen. (retd) J.F.R. Jacob, and Mrs. Ila Pant, wife of the former Defence Minister, Mr. K.C. Pant to join the party particularly at a time when reports of its campaign for the elections say it is "far ahead of other contenders."

Mr. K.R. Malkani, party vice-president, while introducing the new entrants to the party fold during today's briefing, said such eminent people deciding to join the party bode well for the party and also the country at this crucial juncture.

Lt. Gen. Jacob in his statement, recalling his services as a dedicated soldier for 37 years, said the coming elections were critical and stressed the need for pragmatic and flexible foreign and economic policies in the light of the changes taking place the world over. He stressed the need for improving relations with neighbouring democracies.

He made a fervent appeal for extending all possible help to Bangladesh on humanitarian grounds. "Could we not in their hour of need help with more helicopters? Some aircrafts available with the Inland Waterways Transport in Calcutta could be pressed into service to reach the desperately needed food and medical supplies to the affected people, he said.

He also referred to the former Pakistan Prime Minister, Ms. Benazir Bhutto's views on nuclear option and said this was particularly important in the context of the BJP's policy on defence.

'Approached by party': He, however, made it clear that he had joined the party because the party leaders approached him and would be willing to help the party in the areas of his experience. He was neither interested in contesting the election nor campaigning for the party. Party sources said his joining the party would help build its secular credentials and improve the prospects of candidates in West Bengal.

On the Masjid-Mandir issue, Gen. Jacob said the issue should be resolved amicably through dialogue.

Mrs. Ila Pant said it was her personal decision to join the BJP and that her husband had not influenced her. He continued to be with the Congress(I) and was working for it, she added. When asked why it took her so long to snap her connection with the Congress(I) and join the BJP, she said, "Every decision cannot be a snap decision. One

needs some time. It was after a great deal of soul searching after the Ayodhya incident that I decided to join the BJP."

She admitted that she had been associated with the Congress(I) since 1961 in a supportive role and was also a member of the Congress(I). She said that she would campaign for the party if asked. BJP sources indicated that Mrs. Pant might be asked to campaign for the party's candidate in Delhi. But they did not rule out the possibility of her being sent to Nainita for campaigning against Mr. N.D. Tewari.

PTI, UNI report:

Mr. Kirit Patel, son of the younger brother of the Gujarat Chief Minister, Mr. Chimanbhai Patel, has joined the BJP, an Ahmedabad report said.

Mr. Narendra Modi, general secretary of the Gujarat unit of the BJP, said Mr. Patel joined the party, protesting against the launching of a regional party by the Chief Minister and aligning with the Congress(I).

In Rewa, the Mandhya Pradesh Samajwadi Janata Party general secretary and former MLA [member of Legislative Assembly] Chandramani Tripathi and about 500 party workers today joined the BJP.

* VHP Leaders

91AS0980D Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 6 May 91 p 7

[Text] New Delhi, May 5—Leaders of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad [VHP] and saffron-clad saints are busy campaigning for the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] in different parts of the country, according to VHP sources here, reports PTI.

About 10 VHP leaders are contesting the Lok Sabha election on BJP tickets, the sources said, adding the party had "adopted" these leaders as its candidates.

The VHP campaigners touring different parts of the country, including general secretary, Mr. Ashok Singhal, were not campaigning on "a political platform but from the VHP platform," the spokesman said.

The leaders in the election fray include the former Uttar Pradesh Police chief Mr. S.C. Dixit, who is contesting from Varanasi, the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh] leader, Mr. Vinay Katiyar, from Faizabad and the VHP president in Delhi, Mr. B.L. Sharma, contesting from West Delhi.

The saffron-clad candidates include Ms Uma Bharati from Khajuraho, Mahant Avaidyanath from Gorakhpur, Swami Chinmayananda from Badaun and Sachidanand Hari Sakshi from Mathura, the spokesman added.

Meanwhile, the BJP leader, Mr L.K. Advani, who is seeking re-election from the New Delhi parliamentary constituency, today said his party had earlier sought votes to remove the Government but now it was "asking for votes to form its own Government."

Addressing public meetings in different parts of his constituency here, Mr Advani said, "there is a BJP wave in the entire country."

He also inaugurated the BJP election office in his constituency.

According to a party spokesman, a large number of top BJP leaders, including the party president, Mr Murli Manohar Joshi, and vice-presidents, Mr Sunder Singh Bhandari and Mr Sikander Bakht, will address public meetings tomorrow during the second phase of the party's campaigning in the capital.

The BJP today criticized the Election Commission for its "inability" to prevent "misuse of official machinery" by the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues during campaigning.

The party vice-president, Mr Krishan Lal Sharma, alleged the Chief Election Commissioner, Mr T.N. Seshan, was "proving to be a helpless person" in this regard.

In fact, Mr Seshan would be "judged" by the steps he took to prevent misuse of official machinery as, it was important to ensure, "free and fair elections," he said adding the electoral battle would otherwise become "unequal."

Mr Sharma accused the Prime Minister of taking his family along with him in the Government aircraft when he went to file his nomination papers in Ballia in Uttar Pradesh.

Likewise, he alleged that the Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, Mr Subodh Kant Sahay, took a crew of cameramen from Doordarshan when he went to file his nomination papers in Bihar.

Mr Sharma wanted the Election Commission to set up a cell to monitor the AIR [All India Radio] and Doordarshan news bulletins and features.

He urged the commission to ban screening of those films and advertisements on Television in which candidates appeared, till the elections.

He alleged that the Commission had not taken any "concrete" action against State Governments ruled by the Congress-I for violation of the code model of conduct.

The Janata Dal, on the other hand, charged the BJP today with resorting to a "hate campaign" by calling the Imam of Jama Masjid as a "rank communalist."

* Joshi Says BJP Against Theocratic State

91AS0971A Madras THE HINDU in English
7 May 91 p 9

[Text] New Delhi, 6 May—the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president, Mr. Murli Manohar Joshi, today called the coming election "an election about vision."

In a telecast over Doordarshan, Dr. Joshi said India was emotionally on the verge of disintegration "because shortsighted leaders pit caste against caste and religion against religion." Explaining the BJP's slogan of "Ram, roti and insaaf," he said Ram stood for freedom from fear, "roti" for freedom from want and "insaaf" for freedom from discrimination.

He said, "It is only the BJP that repudiates the contention that India is a mere collection of diverse nationalities, castes, communities and religions." "Let us be proud to say that we are Indians, that we believe in Indian nationalism."

Dr. Joshi said the people had, over the years, tried various alternatives and now it was time to give a chance to the BJP which had emerged as an alternative to the Congress(I).

"The colossal human tragedy in Kashmir, the tragedy of people becoming refugees in their own country appear to have left our Government and political parties quite unmoved. Is it legitimate, we ask the people of India, that there should be a separate Constitution for one State? The BJP is committed to the speedy end of the distortions that Article 370 has created," he said.

In his Hindi telecast, which was longer, Dr. Joshi explained the BJP view of Indian polity. His party accepts the diversity of language, dress, customs and mores and ways of worship, stressing that his party was opposed to a theocratic State, he said the BJP considered Bharat as one country, one people, one culture and one nation.

Dr. Joshi said that like the Congress(I), National Front had also distorted secularism to create vote banks. On the Ayodhya question also the two parties hold the same view. These parties had been presenting it as a Mandir-Masjid issue and a dispute between two communities. He reiterated the party's position on the Mandir issue.

* BJP Edge in U.P. Seen Growing

91AS0965B Madras THE HINDU in English
18 May 91 p 10

[Article by P.K. Roy in Lucknow]

[Text] The final crucial burst of electioneering now under way would be decisive in nearly half of the 85 Lok Sabha seats from Uttar Pradesh [UP]. The outcome in the other half of the seats was little in doubt, given the respective party influence, stature and resourcefulness of candidates and of course caste and communal configuration. The BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] appears to be ahead of the Janata Dal [JD], the Congress(I) and the SJP [Samajwadi Janata Party] in the State, successful as it has been in projecting Ayodhya as the main issue. The euphoria has deepened each passing day, accruing mileage to the BJP, notwithstanding the near total Muslim aversion and the powerful undercurrent for Mandal among the affected segments.

So much so that Mr. V.P. Singh too invoked the Ayodhya issue, according it precedence over Mandal and social justice theme, mainly with an eye on the Muslim vote bank which is decisive in at least 30 Lok Sabha constituencies. In fact BJP-baiting which is turning shriller each successive day and forms considerable part of its detractors speeches, is only making it a most talked about issue. To everyone's surprise Mr. V.P. Singh during his recent whirlwind tour of eastern U.P. devoted more time to the contentious issue, than perhaps Mr. Advani and Mr. Vajpayee. And he justified it by saying that this was not only a poll issue, but has profound relevance for the country's future and hence he plans to carry on the debate. And strangely he had no reference about the Congress or the SJP. The Congress is dead, he explained, and hence no reference about it and the only indirect reference about the SJP was that its leaders stabbed him in the back.

With an eye on Muslim vote: But, surely Mr. V.P. Singh knew it well that in the eastern U.P., or for that matter elsewhere, the Congress is not totally written off and in several constituencies it is in the contest and perhaps powerfully so. And so is the SJP, although on a much lesser scale. The significance accorded to the BJP and the Ayodhya issue in near total exclusion of references to the other two parties, is only to impress upon the Muslims of the State that only the Janata Dal has the potential to face the BJP in U.P. and others do not matter. He dwelt on the issue at length where the Muslim turn-out in his meetings was large. None would vouch that the total Muslim vote would fall in the kitty of the Janata Dal in U.P., but surely it is going to be the chief beneficiary at least in regard to the Lok Sabha seats.

Mr. V.P. Singh has been successful to win over that section of Muslims who would have voted for the Bahujan Samaj Party in eastern U.P.—particularly the weavers in the handloom belt. And that surely was a significant gain. The scare about the BJP in the Muslims mind being assiduously created by its main rivals, can spell myriad fallouts. The State and local level BJP leaders as also the VHP [Visha Hindu Parishad] leaders, particularly the redoubtable Sadhvi Ritambhara have only helped the Janata Dal and the Congress' task by strident campaign. Sadhvi Ritambhara, in her twenties, draws more frenzied crowd, including large womenfolk, than many stalwarts of the other parties even in her mid-day meetings. Muslims have in particular been apprehensive of this saffron clad nun. These are then saints and of course the VHP stalwart, Mr. Ashok Singhal, mincing no words to drive home their aggressive

message. Muslims in areas where the Congress or the SJP would appear well poised against the BJP, would prefer them over the J.D.

BJP makes inroads: It would be erroneous to conclude that any particular segment would vote entirely for a party. With the temple issue the BJP has made inroads among the backward classes, particularly the Kurmis, Koeries and Lodh Rajputs. In Ayodhya the BJP candidate is a Kurmi facing the main challenge from the Janata Dal supported CPI [Communist Party of India] leader. So also in a number of other seats, such as Lakhimpur, Kheri and Fatehpur. But, more than these the Ram wave has made its impact on most sections and areas which never in the past were the BJP strongholds. This is true of the central and eastern U.P.—more the former. Mr. L.K. Advani was not exaggerating when he claimed that the BJP appeal was growing each passing day. And, this has penetrated now in the countryside so much that out of deep commitment to a particular non-BJP candidate they may vote for him, but the other votes would go to Ram. Such are reports from Amethi, Ballia, Fatehpur and Lucknow—all VVIP [expansion not given] constituencies. One for kaam (development work) and the other for Ram for instance in Amethi. In Lucknow the non-BJP Assembly candidates are seeking votes for themselves giving option to electorate to stamp for Mr. Vajpayee. And this would be the experience elsewhere.

Organisational slackness: If the Congress(I) could not turn its stability plank into a major issue or for that matter the price rise factor, the organisational slackness is to be blamed. The party could not pump as much money as in the past in the electioneering and its uppercaste workers are apologetic about the support to Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav. The workers have been used to function as ruling party members. The Ayodhya issue too made an impact on Brahmins in particular, who have veered towards the BJP. The Congress is in fight only where it has a powerful candidate who has his own resources and local clout. While, other parties could get over the usual dissensions to varying degrees over ticket distribution the Congress(I) is plagued with it. Workers are clearly handicapped by paucity of resources. The publicity materials reached late.

Then the sole effective campaigner is Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, while the BJP has two crowd gatherers—Mr. Advani and Mr. Vajpayee, besides Dr. M.M. Joshi, the party chief, Mr. Vijayraje Scindia, and the saints of VHP persuasion including Shankaracharyas to campaign for it effectively. Even the Janata Dal has besides Mr. V.P. Singh, Mr. Ajit Singh the Bihar Chief Minister, Mr. Lallu Prasad Yadav and Mr. Sharad Yadav to campaign. For the SJP, Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav proved a better crowd puller than the Prime Minister Mr Chandra Shekhar, many of whose meetings had to be cancelled owing to very poor turn-outs. All these had an impact on the morale of the party workers.

Save a handful, not many who are poised to win, would do it by landslide margins in this election given the multi-corner contests. Notwithstanding a wave of sorts for the BJP over the Ayodhya issue, due to the Muslim factor as also of the backward classes, particularly where its candidates belong to upper castes, the party has to exert hard to ensure a victory.

The Janata Dal, although enjoying Muslim and backward class support, is constrained by the resistance from the upper castes, who are by no means at the receiving and vis-a-vis the backward classes as would be the case in some States. Mr. Ajit Singh, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed are in tough contest in Baghpat and Muzaffarnagar respectively, although Mr. Rasheed Masoodis better placed in Saharanpur. Mr. Sharad Yadav is locked in a grim triangular contest with the BJP's saint nominee Chinmayanand in Badaun. Mrs Maneka Gandhi on the other hand would appear to be better placed in Pilibhit. In Nainital, the former Chief Minister, Mr. N.D. Tiwari is again better placed. The BJP candidate in Kannauj, the former senior bureaucrat Mr. T.N. Chaturvedi is facing tough time against the SJP candidate the BJP is poised better in Garhwal—the ex-general Khanduri giving Mr. Satyapal Maharaj, a religious leader and Congress candidate, a run for his money. Hardwar would appear to present a rosy picture for the BJP. The Congress nominee in Rampur, Nawab Zulfiqar Ali, appears to be most solidly placed. That way there are a few surer seats in the western U.P.

Better placed: The central U.P. presents a happy scenario, where the BJP is poised to secure most of the seats. In Lucknow the party stalwart Mr. Vajpayee is very reassured as also the seats in Bahraich, Gonda, Sultanpur, Lakhimpur, Shahjahanpur, Kanpur, Rae Bareli and Bilhaur. Jhansi and Banda in Bundelkhand shows better prospects. The Etawah, Mainpuri, Farukhabad districts are on the other hand the strongholds of Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav and in fact he is concentrating mainly on them. Not to say the Muslim dominated constituencies of western U.P. Eastern U.P. has also a scenario where the J.D. and the BJP are in the main contest save in Ghosi, Ghazipur, Ballia or Domrianganj. The CPI has pockets of influence and its making common cause with the J.D. holds hopes for the latter.

The Bahujan Samaj Party, which emerged as a force to reckon with in several of the Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies in 1989 elections, was courted by the Congress, the Janata Dal and the SJP. Its supremo, Mr. Kanshi Ram, who was keeping his options open. He had even gone on record of possible support to the BJP at the Centre. The conditions of support had many aspects including lucre, that put off many, including the Congress.

Uttar Pradesh will go to the polls on May 20 and 26. The important constituencies like Amethi and Fatehpur, Jaswantnagar, the latter of the Chief Minister, Mr. Yadav, are scheduled on May 20. Ballia, Lucknow and Ayodhya would vote on May 26. Most of the major

parties would shift their poll workers from the constituencies going to polls on May 20 to others, where campaign would continue till May 23. An additional task would be to ensure that ballot boxes are not changed, as apprehensions in that regard have already been expressed in Etawah for instance, the Congress(I) and other parties have taken an exception to the reports that ballot boxes would be kept inside a college instead of in the collectorate, as in the normal practice. The reports of ballot papers being printed in private printing presses instead of State Government presses, a departure made this time, caused consternation. The Election Commission has been intimated about the possibility of rigging after polling, which can take several forms. And of course, the possibilities of both capture and violence on the polling day, in targeted areas, besides communal and casteist conflagrations to keep off scared sections from voting. These are imponderables which influence the polling and its outcome in several pockets of the State.

* BJP Gaining Acceptance in Bengal

91AS0965A Madras THE HINDU in English 18 May 91 p 7

[Text] Calcutta, May 17—Is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) only a paper tiger in West Bengal?

Those who think it is, now tend to take a more cautious view of the party's current status in the State's polarised scene. They admit the BJP is still way behind the Congress(I) and the CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist], though it is gaining wider acceptance. It has an uphill task in building party infrastructure establishing local identity in rural and semi-urban areas to match the highly organised apparatus of the Marxists.

None the less, the BJP is making a determined bid to spread its wings. It has been steadily gaining ground over the decade. In the 1982 Assembly poll, it polled barely 0.61 percent of the votes. Of the 54 BJP candidates, 53 lost their deposits.

Impressive rise: In the March 1987 Assembly poll, it fractionally improved its share of popular votes to 0.51 percent, though almost all the contestants forfeited their deposits again. In the November 1989 Lok Sabha elections, although it failed to win any of the 19 of the 42 seats it contested from the State, its percentage share of popular votes recorded an impressive rise to 1.67 from barely 0.40 in the 1984 Lok Sabha poll.

Although it has joined the electoral battle on an ambitious scale by fielding candidates in all the 42 Lok Sabha and 290 of the 294 Assembly seats in the May 20 elections, party spokesmen realise that electoral victory is still a far cry. Its spokesmen admit that whether it wins or losses is not relevant to the long-term strategy. What is important is that the BJP has come to stay in the State.

This strategy was spelt out when the BJP's national executive met in Calcutta in April last year when it had struck an uneasy friendship with the Left at the national level while continuing to attack the CPI(M) dominated fronts in West Bengal and Kerala. It was a bizarre situation since both the BJP and the Left Front had become the crutches of the National Front Government of Mr. V.P. Singh. Supporting the regime at the Centre was a matter of time-serving strategy for the BJP.

It helped it buy time to dig in States where it had no roots, West Bengal, in particular. The resolutions passed at the Calcutta meeting were vehemently critical of the National Front's economic policies. Mr. Madhu Dandavate's first budget was lambasted by Mr. L.K. Advani.

How could the party vote for the budget on the floor of the House and shred it to pieces outside? Mr. Advani did not bother about such aberrations in parliamentary norms as long as it suited his strategy.

Major problem: But the BJP's major problem in West Bengal is its image as a party belonging to the Bania community. It recruited new hands, but its base, the Rashtriya Swayam Sevaks (RSS) [as published] was weak in the State as Bengalis showed little interest in it at any time. Even now, mostly upcountry activists are seen at RSS meetings in the city and suburbs. But in the districts, things are changing, particularly in the border areas.

Sensing the mood of the people, the BJP began to air its ambitions publicly that it hopes to become the third force in Bengal's turbulent politics. The time was ripe to broaden its base into the districts. North Bengal was a fertile ground for the BJP as it saw the political mileage it can draw by highlighting the problem of infiltration of aliens with covert support of vested interests on this side of the border.

The BJP has thus partly succeeded in shedding its image of being a party of traders. Many still regard it as a party with obscurantist religious views epitomised in its attitude toward the Ayodhya mandir issue.

New image: The party has now begun to recruit some luminaries to give it a new image. The film star, Victor Banerjee, who is contesting from the Calcutta North West Lok Sabha seat, is its prize catch. A local wag said that while Satyajit Ray and David Lean could extract the best out of Victor Banerjee, it remains to be seen how far the BJP will succeed in getting the best out of him.

Yet another luminary is Mr. Manohar Aich. The 78-year-old body-builder who had flexed his muscles to win international awards decades ago has joined the BJP and is contesting from North 24 Parganas.

The new president of the BJP, Mr. Murali Manohar Joshi, when asked to comment on reports that his party represented mainly the interests of business community, he dismissed it as a mischievous propaganda of the marxists. Apart from Victor Banerjee, a few retired army generals, an eye surgeon and others from different walks of life had evinced interest in joining the party. "How can you say the BJP is a bania party," he asked.

In Calcutta North West, the BJP has high hopes of winning the seat although the Congress(I) has a formidable hold on its electorate. In Chowringhee also, the BJP is taking the contest seriously. But it is in the North Bengal districts that the BJP is expected to show better performance. Whether this will help the party to consolidate its position to emerge as a third force, only time will tell.

* Analyst Calls Poll 'Beginning of New Era'

91AS0965C Bombay TIMES OF INDIA in English 19 May 91 p 11

[Article by Girilal Jain: "Poll Marks Beginning of New Era"]

[Text] New Delhi—The present election is a turning point in the history of post-independent India. It marks the end of the old and the beginning of a new era in Indian politics. The decline of the 105-year-old Congress and the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] symbolize this radical change.

The cultural-civilizational recovery of India will be the dominant theme of this new era, though of course, problems relating to rapid economic growth and social justice will need to be addressed. And the BJP alone, among political formations, has chosen to be an instrument of India's cultural-civilizational recovery and reaffirmation. As such, it is natural that it will figure prominently in the reshaping of India in the coming years and decades. But others too will play their part in the gigantic enterprise.

When a master idea seizes the mind, as socialism did in the '20s and Hindutva now, it must usher in a radical change. In the '20s and the decades that followed, conservative forces were not strong enough to resist the socialist idea. Similarly, conservative forces are not strong enough today to defeat the Hindutva ideal.

Over 70 years ago, the great seer, Sri Aurobindo wrote: "...At present we have only two extremes of conservative immobility and incompetence, imprisoned in the shell of past conventions and a progressive force hardly less blind and ineffectual because it is second-hand and merely imitative of nineteenth century Europe." He hoped that a new spiritual awakening would arise from the depth of Indian humanity.

This is precisely what is happening in India today. "Conservative immobility imprisoned in past conventions," has virtually disappeared from the lives of millions of Hindus as a result of a series of developments in the fields of economic growth, education, political mobilization, communications and transport. So also, the attempt to reshape India "in the crude mould of westernized social and political reformers, whose mind, barren of original thought and unenlightened by vital experience" has failed. These reformers, could "do nothing but reproduce the forms and ideas of Europe," and tried unwittingly to "turn us all into halting apes of the West."

The proponents and promoters of yesterday's secularist-socialist order continue to fight in order to keep the BJP out of power under the separate banners of the Congress, the two communist parties and the Janata Dal. However, two points need to be kept in view while assessing this resistance to the BJP. First, it is necessary if the BJP is to be forged into an effective enough instrument for presiding over India's self-recovery, self-renewal and self-affirmation. Too easy a victory would be a disaster. Second, it is bound to fail. The BJP may or may not make it this time. Nevertheless, it is a formidable contender for power in the near future.

At a certain stage in a civilization's life, however, the movement of time, as it were, accelerates, and developments take place at a dizzying pace. Facts in the present case need only to be listed to be recognised for what they are—signs of the inpending change.

The first such fact, in my view, is the Faizabad magistrate's decision in 1986 to open the gates of the structure known as Babri Masjid in Ayodhya so that intending worshippers of the Ramlalla idol installed there since 1949, could visit that place freely. This action, set in motion, through the campaign for Ram's temple on the Janmabhoomi site, a chain of developments which cumulatively has given the BJP its present appeal and strength.

Within months of the removal of the padlock in Ayodhya, we witnessed the beginning of the clash between Rajiv Gandhi and V.P. Singh, culminating first in the rise of a major challenge to the former in 1987-88 and then his exit from the office of prime minister in 1989. As a result of the anti-Rajiv atmosphere which Singh created and the alliance system which he was obliged to forge to secure his objective of replacing Rajiv Gandhi as prime minister, the BJP acquired a significant presence in the Lok Sabha, which it desperately needed to make a bid for power on its own.

Left to its own devices, the BJP leadership would have preferred to play safe and allow the V.P. Singh government to continue in office for a full five-year term. But that was not to be. On the one hand, the pressure from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad leadership on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue built up and, on the other, V.P. Singh went ahead with his decision to implement the Mandal Commission report last August creating 27 percent reservations in government jobs. As a result, the BJP withdrew its support. The government fell and the Janata Dal split, making a fresh poll inevitable. The attempt to postpone elections through a minority government supported by the Congress from outside had to fail and it happened last March.

As I look back on the developments in the last five years, I wonder if any human agency wanting to help the BJP could have arranged the actions of the principal actors

better than what has happened in the natural course. Rajiv Gandhi blames the Janata Dal and the Communists for the rise of the BJP and they in turn blame him. Both are right. And that is how radical changes are wrought in societies.

(Editor's Note: Girilal Jain was former Editor-in-Chief of TIMES OF INDIA)

* Reports on Political Situation in Tamil Nadu

* Militants an Issue

91AS0978A Madras THE HINDU in English 4 May 91 p 3

[Text] Madras, May 3—The Sri Lankan Tamils issue remains alive in Tamil Nadu and as such receives the close and careful attention of the political parties.

As the DMK [Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam] Government was dismissed on the basis of the Centre's assessment of the situation in the State arising out the "activities" of the Tamil militants here, the issue cannot but figure in the campaign of all parties.

While the national parties and their manifestos have dealt with the Sri Lankan issue only in passing, as part of the foreign policy, the regional parties have dealt with it in some detail.

Emotional, financial aspects: Two concrete aspects of the ethnic issue have a direct bearing on Tamil Nadu. On the emotional side, the continued suffering of the Tamils in the island, the unabated killings everyday and their struggle for basic rights and livelihood agitate the people's minds here. And on the financial and physical side, the rehabilitation of over one lakh refugees in different parts of the State has made a deep impact.

While the overall support for the cause of the Lankan Tamils cannot be doubted, the activities of some militant groups, using Tamil Nadu as a base for their fight in the island and to settle their scores here has lost them public sympathy to some extent.

The smuggling of petroleum products, particularly in the November-February period when they were rather scarce here, by the militants to Sri Lanka also earned them a bad name.

Case for lasting solution: Be it the people or the political parties, they are keen on finding a lasting settlement to the ethnic strife in the island so that the refugees can return to their homes in peace and dignity. Among the parties in Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK [All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam] and the PMK [Pattali Makkal Katchi] have been more vocal and clearcut on the issue.

The AIADMK has called for a fresh and "honourable" agreement between the Governments of India and Sri Lanka to solve the problem. It has noted that the earlier agreement has been put in cold storage and "thousands of innocent Tamil youths have been arrested and ruthlessly murdered by the Sri Lankan Army and security forces."

The party has blamed the erstwhile V.P. Singh and Karunanidhi Governments, for their "partisan attitude and half-hearted approach that have further aggravated the problem." Besides striving for a fresh agreement, the AIADMK has pledged not to allow the Tamil militants to "use Tamil Nadu as their base to promote anti-national and terrorist activities in India."

PMK's promise: As for the PMK , it makes it clear that Tamil Eelam will be the only, final solution to the problem of Tamils. Squarely condemning what it calls the "opportunistic attitude" of the earlier State Governments and the "indifference" of the Governments at the Centre for the continuing suffering and the genocide of Tamils there, the PMK promises to work for a separate Eelam by having a resolution adopted by the State legislature, if voted to power.

Strangely, the DMK has not concentrated on this issue.

Its manifesto says "The DMK party and DMK Government have never hesitated to condemn the violent and antisocial activities of Sri Lankan Tamil militant groups. At the same time, it supports the struggle against the suppression of rights of the people of Tamil Eelam and we will continue to press the Government of India to secure the conditions under which the rights of the Tamil people in Tamil Eelam will be ensured in a peaceful atmosphere and the lakhs of refugees, who have come to Tamil Nadu can return to Sri Lanka."

DMK 'to press Centre': Without openly advocating or supporting a separate homeland for Tamils, the DMK always sticks to the usage of Tamil Eelam while referring to the issue. But it has promised only to "press the Centre" for creating favourable conditions in the island so that the refugees can return home.

The Tamil Nadu Congress(I) Committee plans to come out with a separate manifesto for the State elections and this is expected only next week. Its stand on the Lanka issue has been well defined and the party considers the earlier Indo-Sri Lanka agreement as the starting point for any further discussions between the two Governments.

* Third Front Emerges

91AS0978B Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 25 Apr 91 p 7

[Article by G.C. Shekhar]

[Text] Madras, April 24—The Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), which has emerged as the third front in Tamil Nadu, considerably improved its electoral chances by roping in the Muslim League (Abdus Samad) into its fold and also inducting the former minister in MGR's [M.G. Ramachandran] Cabinet, Mr Panruti S. Ramachandran.

The presence of Mr Samad would definitely give the PMK a stronger foothold in North Arcot district where there is a sizeable Muslim population along with a large presence of Vanniyars, the PMK's backbone.

For Mr Samad this is the best arrangement after having been edged out of the Congress-AIADMK [All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam] combine and the DMK firmly entrenched with another faction of the league led by Mr Abdul Latheef. But his credibility has taken a sound beating after having drifted from the DMK to the Congress and finally to the PMK.

Dr S. Ramdoss, the leader of the PMK, told newsmen that Mr Samad and Mr Ramachandran shared his party's view that everything should be done to prevent the Congress, the DMK and the AIADMK from coming to power. But then this is a hollow claim since Mr Ramachandran and Mr Samad are known to be pro-Congress and the main reason for their alliance with the PMK is for an outside chance to make it to the Assembly.

Mr Ramachandran too, like Mr Samad, was stuck in a cleft after his friends Mr Thirunavukarasu and Mr K.S.R. Ramachandran tied up with the DMK, leaving him high and dry. Having taken a total anti-Karunanidhi line since he joined MGR, it became difficult for Mr Ramachandran to fight an election as an ally of the DMK.

With Mr Ramdoss he could strike common cause since both belong to the Vanniyar community and the former minister is said to be the man who had egged on Dr Ramdoss to float the PMK to challenge both Mr Karunanidhi and Ms Jayalalitha.

Mr Ramachandran had been in on a limbo after he was expelled by Ms Jayalalitha in 1988, who later re-admitted his fellow rebels but kept him out describing him as a destructive force.

When Messrs Thirunavukarasu and K.S.R. Ramachandran were expelled from the AIADMK last year they invited Mr Ramachandran to be the president of their outfit, but only to leave him out in the cold while aligning with Mr Karunanidhi.

*** Tamil Nadu Political Contestants**

* Karunanidhi's Assaults Viewed

91AS0769A New Delhi DINMAN TIMES in Hindi 24-30 Mar 91 p 3

[An unedited presentation of Karunanidhi's speech in Patna: "Mr. Karunanidhi's Verbal Assault on Rajiv and Chandra Shekhar"]

[Text] Before I start my lecture, I would like to introduce myself. I am an antinationalist. I give important information to other countries; therefore, I am a very dangerous animal to this country.

My dear brothers and sisters, these are the epithets that have been given to me by a great patriot and an independence fighter. These were given to me by a man who had spent many years in jail in the Andaman Islands with Lokmanya Balgangadhar Tilak and other famous leaders. Who is that great patriot? He is no other than Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, and another one who always agrees with him, Mr. Chandra Shekhar.

However, I admit that I have no relationship with Italy. I have never been to Switzerland. I do not even have an account in a Swiss bank. I have never met the notorious arms dealer Adnan Khashuqji. I have not even had dinner with him. I am still being called a traitor.

I am 67 years old, and I have served the people for 53 years. However, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and his political ally in Tamil Nadu, who had served the people for less than 10 years, insist on calling me a traitor. I have been arrested 20 times for public service, while she had seen a jail only on a movie screen or a video film. And she still calls me a traitor. What bothers me is that even Mr. Chandra Shekhar has accepted it. He did that because he was acting as a front for Mr. Rajiv Gandhi.

The people of Tamil Nadu elected my party to run the government for five years, but within two years, Mr. Chandra Shekhar's minority government dismissed it. He also dismissed my friend Mr. Mahant's government in Assam. He also dismissed the DMK [Dravidian Progressive Foundation] and Janata Dal's coalition government in Pondicherry.

I think that Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and Mr. Chandra Shekhar are experts in the art of dismissing. [pun; meaning abortion]

However, before these two could throw out Lalu Prasad Yadav's government, they themselves were thrown out.

I will tell you a short story. A magician created a monkey and gave many flower garlands to that monkey. Now what would a monkey do to those garlands? The monkey, without understanding the value of those flowers, destroyed them and made a thousand pieces of those garlands. Those garlands are Assam, Tamil Nadu, and Pondicherry.

The magician finally gave a garland called Haryana to the monkey. The monkey however, instead of destroying it, put it around his neck. The magician got very angry and threw the monkey into a well.

This monkey is no one else than Mr. Chandra Shekhar himself. He is swimming in the well now with the help of a raft called the temporary government.

This help was given to him by the National Front and the Left Front parties. We all emphasized temporary government because the corrupt magician is worse than the monkey.

This monkey business of Rajiv and Chandra Shekhar has been going on and they dismissed even Bihar's governor,

Mr. Mohammed Yunus Salim, without checking on the fact that the speech for the governor was prepared by Mr. Lalu Prasad Yadav's cabinet.

I would like to bow my head in respect to the great son of Punjab, Mr. Barnala. He stayed truthful just like the governor of Tamil Nadu. He refused to sign the false documents prepared by the intelligence bureau and such intelligence agencies as the RA.

I would like to show my own appreciation as well as that of the people of Tamil Nadu, the DMK party, the National Front, and the Left Wing party leaders, Lalu Prasad Yadav, and the people of Bihar. All of them had as a group condemned the injustice carried out when elected governments were dismissed.

The time has come now to make the people forget those who had dismissed elected governments and throw them in the trash basket of history.

We are all tied here by social justice and secularism. I want to proudly declare that Tamil Nadu has always been in the forefront in the area of social justice. Thanks to such leaders as Parryar and Dr. Annadurai, we have been reserving government jobs since 1921. It has been going on for 70 years.

Now 51 percent of government jobs are reserved for backward tribes and 19 percent are reserved for Harijans. In other words, we have 70 percent of the positions reserved for us. The sky will not fall with this reservation issue. I want to apologize, but I want to say again that Tamil Nadu is one of the best-administrated states in India.

If state governments can do that, then why not the central government?

Mr. V. P. Singh was right in what he did. However, vested interests could not tolerate this, and he had to sacrifice his government. The land of Bihar is the holy land of Lord Buddha. It is the holy land of Emperor Asoka. It is the land of Rajendra Prasad, Lokmanya, Jaya Prakash Narayan, Babu Jagjivan Ram, and my close friend Kapuri Thakur.

At the site of this great city of Patna once stood the city of Patliputra, capital of Emperor Chandra Gupta's empire. The history tells us that 2,000 years ago, this Patliputra was nine miles long and two and one-half miles wide. There were huge forts with 64 doors and 570 minarets. It is deplorable that those forts are not here any more, because those forts were made of wood.

I want to add regretfully that we were dependent on wooden walls. That is why we had lost the great Patliputra of our National Front government.

Now we have to make our National Front government with concrete and steel, so that it protects the backwards sects, the weak groups, the Harijans, the women, and the minorities for a long, long time to come.

We support secularism, social justice, unity, and democracy, because India cannot be strong without these.

I am appealing to you, all of you, the backward classes of India, the scheduled classes and tribes, the minorities: wake up and unite, or you will be lost for good.

At this very important point in history, I am repeating my promise to Mr. V.P. Singh, whatever you are, we are with you. We will walk with you and hold your hand while you try to get social justice and secularism for us all.

* Political Coalition Forming

91AS0769B New Delhi DINMAN TIMES in Hindi 24-30 Mar 91 p 4

[Commentary: "Tamil Nadu: The Wind of Political Coalitions Is Blowing Strong"]

[Text] There are two challengers for the political leadership in Tamil Nadu—one is Dravida Munetra Kagzam (DMK) and the other is Anna Dravida Munetra Kagzam (ADMK). The leader of the DMK is M. Karunanidhi and of the ADMK is Miss Jayalalitha who had been surrounded by the question of succession after the death of M.G. Ramachandran. She was, however, able to assert her leadership in 1991.

The Congress [I] Party may have been the ruling party a long time ago; however, at present it is playing a marginal role in Tamil Nadu. It formed coalitions alternatively with the DMK and the ADMK during the last elections. There was a straight distribution in these coalitions and it won plenty of seats in the Lok Sabha.

There is no competition between Karunanidhi and Jayalalitha if we compare the contestants for their political experience. The 67-years old Karunanidhi has a political life of 53 years and has served as the chief minister of the state twice. He has spent 20 years in jails also. Jayalalitha is 24 years younger than him and her political experience is less than 10 years. However, the struggle she went through in order to become the successor to M.G. Ramachandran and also to take control of the ADMK has made her strong enough to challenge Karunanidhi.

It should be remembered that DMK has been a member of the National Front and has collaborated with the Janata Dal or V.P. Singh. One of its representatives was a central cabinet member. On the other hand, Jayalalitha and the ADMK have worked with the Congress [I] and Rajiv Gandhi. The issue of cooperating with the Congress [I] has been a sore subject within this party and often causes dissatisfaction. However, Jayalalitha has managed to keep a strong lid on it.

As for the present election agreement, Jayalalitha has agreed to let the ADMK have 168 legislative seats and the Congress [I] Party to have 66 seats. Meanwhile in the Lok Sabha elections, the Congress [I] will run from 28 constituencies and the ADMK from the remaining 11. Since there is some opposition to this agreement in the

party, the Congress [I] Party would be in trouble if Jayalalitha is forced to back off from the agreement.

The DMK will form an election coalition with the Janata Dal. Karunanidhi will, of course, attend various election rallies in north India. He was present in the Patna rally.

Since the Janata Dal, especially V.P. Singh, has repeatedly talked about reserving employment quota for backward sects in the context of implementing Mandal Commission's recommendations and Jayalalitha knows that this could have an impact on the elections and the ADMK. She has, therefore, clarified her policy. She has announced that if V.P. Singh believes that the ADMK would not be implementing the Mandal Commission recommendations, then he must not have studied the recommendations carefully. He should know that the ADMK had increased this quota to over 50 percent during M.G. Ramachandran's chief ministership.

The fact is that the DMK and the ADMK are the kinds of parties whose assistance is sought by the Congress [I], the Janata Dal, and the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] alike. Recently, Dr. Murlimanohar Joshi, the BJP president, had announced in his speech to the press in Madras that the BJP has no objection to forming an election coalition with the ADMK. Dr. Joshi had added that while he could not comment on the ADMK, he was sure that Jayalalitha and the BJP had agreement on several national issues. Dr. Joshi has gone there to attend the birthday celebration of Kamkoti Pith's Shankaracharya. Jayalalitha is a devotee of Shankracharya.

Another fact is that the relationship between the Congress [I] and the ADMK is a little strained now. There are some signs of strain between the Janata Dal and the DMK even though both of them are members of the National Front. Shivaji Ganeshan, the regional president of Janata Dal, announced that he would like to improve the relationship between the two parties. Meanwhile, Manoharan, the DMK assistant secretary, does not agree with him. Manoharan asks, if the Janata Dal is so popular in the Nation, then why is it so eager to piggyback on the DMK? It is Bommai, the Janata Dal president, who had announced this popularity of his party in his speech in Salem. The DMK leaders did not like it.

Manoharan has also expressed another concern about his own party's self-destructive members misleading Mr. Bommai. A lot of importance was given to the fact that when V.P. Singh had arrived at the Madras airport on his way to Salem, no DMK leader had come there to welcome him. According to Manoharan, the DMK was not aware of V.P. Singh's schedule. Also, Karunanidhi had himself admitted that the Janata Dal had not invited the DMK to the Salem meeting.

Anyhow, the series of election coalitions has started. We shall see which of these equations become strong and which ones remain weak.

* Tamil Nadu: Victory Said Certain for Coalition

91AS0703A New Delhi DINMAN TIMES in Hindi 3-9 Mar 91 p 6

[Commentary by Special DINMAN TIMES Correspondent: "ADMK-Congress [I] Victory Certain"]

[Text] Jayalalitha's ADMK [Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam] has already established its identity even before the Vidhan Sabha elections. By agreeing on one-fourth of Vidhan Sabha seat, Congress (I) president Rajiv Gandhi has admitted that his party cannot have a hold in Tamil Nadu without using ADMK as a crutch. Rajiv Gandhi has openly said that Jayalalitha is the real heir to the M.G. Ramachandran's political dynasty. Rajiv Gandhi's statement can also be interpreted that the Congress [I] Party can reach the MGR's vote bank only with Jayalalitha's help.

The ADMK is pleasantly surprised at this move by the Congress [I] Party. Many ADMK leaders had thought that the old seats formula would be used again. Last time two-thirds of the seats were to be held by the ADMK and one-third by the Congress (I). However, in the elections, the ADMK only got one-third of the seats and the Congress [I] won two-thirds of the seats. In this election agreement, Rajiv Gandhi has given 168 out of 234 seats to ADMK which gives it 12 more seats than the last time. Rajiv Gandhi has done it for several reasons. He felt that if there was no agreement, then M. Karunanidhi and the DMK [Dravidian Progressive Foundation] party would benefit. The Congress (I) ran alone during the 1989 Vidhan Sabha elections. At that time, the Congress [I] and ADMK both won 26 seats each while the DMK got 146 seats. The DMK won many seats by a very narrow margin.

The DMK lost badly when the Congress [I] and the ADMK ran as a team in the 1989 Lok Sabha elections. The DMK could not win even one out of 39 Lok Sabha seats. The DMK also lost three by-elections later.

The state Congress [I] Party had to admit that it would not win the chief minister's office. Jayalalitha demanded this office and said that the ADMK wants to establish the MGR regime in the state again. In other words, she told them that the office should be given to Jayalalitha. The local Congress [I] leaders had already announced their intention to contend for 50 percent of the seats, however, they had to bow down to Rajiv Gandhi's wishes.

This coalition would not have been formed if G.K. Moopnar, the Congress [I] leader, had been stubborn. Moopnar continued to argue with the state Congress [I] president K. Ramamurthy and finally he (Moopnar) bowed out. The Congress [I] Party has actually pulled a fast one here. Now it can claim more seats in the Lok Sabha elections and Jayalalitha would not be in a position to deny that.

Based on the votes cast for various parties in the January 1989 elections, we can forecast that Congress [I]-ADMK coalition would form a government by winning 150 seats. This would mean that both parties will be able to win two-thirds of the seats.

Jayalalitha is demanding early elections in the state after being encouraged by these developments. She had demanded this from Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar when she met him. She is asking for Vidhan Sabha elections by the end of March. If the elections are held in March, Jayalalitha will be sitting in the chair in Fort Saint George.

There is a strong basis for the belief that the DMK will lose and the Congress-ADMK coalition will win. The two factions of the ADMK had fought elections separately (under the leadership of Jayalalitha and MGR's widow Janaki Ramchandran) in the January 1989 elections. The DMK and other parties had benefited by this division of Anti-DMK votes. The DMK had only 33.44 percent of the votes. Jayalalitha's ADMK had 21.68 percent of the votes, the Congress (I) 20.24 percent, and Janaki's ADMK had only 9.12 percent of the votes. The Marxist Communist Party (CPM) had only 3.44 percent of the votes.

We note that the ADMK factions and the Congress [I] Party had a total of 51.04 percent of the votes which is more than the combined votes received by the DMK and the CPM. Now the ADMK is united. There is the Thirunavkarsu faction; however, it is meaningless and it is rumored that this faction will join Jayalalitha's ADMK soon. If the ADMK-Congress [I] coalition manages to get as many votes as they did in the last election—and there is no doubt about it—then the coalition will win by a large margin. The DMK and CPM campaign is not expected to win more that 42 seats.

The Janata Dal, Chandra Shekhar's Janata Dal (S), the CPI [Communist Party of India] and other parties are expected to have a nominal success. It is definite that the Congress (I) will return to power in Tamil Nadu after 24 years even though as a junior partner.

* Editorial Views Poll Prospects in Assam

91AS0999I Madras THE HINDU in English 29 Apr 91 p 8

[Article: "Poll Prospects in Assam"]

[Text] When the union Government finally decided on elections in Punjab and Assam followed by the announcement of the dates by the Election Commission, it was the signal for the political parties in the two States to start hectic work. The Congress(I), for instance, was openly advocating an indefinite postponement of the poll on the plea that the law and order situation was such that there could be no guarantee of a free and fair exercise. Assam will have a two-day poll on June 6 and 8 and the various contending parties are now convinced that it would not be outside the realm of practical possibility to go ahead with the elections given the fact that organisations like the United Liberation Front of Asom [UFLA] are not going to come in the way. That much has been said by the ULFA which declared it would not interfere with the democratic process. At the same time, it has announced that it would not support any particular party or candidates. The fact that it continues to be a banned outfit has imposed certain limitations on its functioning in the electoral context but if it totally remains neutral there is every chance of the elections yielding the desired results without being vitiated by external considerations. As if to show the appreciation of the administration to the positive response on the part of the ULFA, the Governor has announced that the Army and the para military forces will suspend their special operations against the organisation. There have been reports that the Army had already started returning to the barracks. This single act alone is bound to have a chastening effect on the ULFA and there is every hope that the next few weeks will see genuine political activity.

Of course, there has been some debate on whether the poll should be held on a single day as is going to be the case in Punjab, but considering the difficult terrain in some districts in Assam it has been decided to have a two day poll so that the available security forces could be effectively deployed. For whatever be the attitude of the ULFA there are still some antisocial elements out to wreck the democratic process and there is need to take adequate precautionary steps too that the elections when held are as free and fair as possible. The decision of the All Bodo Students' Union [ABSU] and the Bodo Peoples' Action Committee to take part in the elections has also added a positive dimension to the poll process. Although the two organisations are not setting up candidates of their own they have resolved to support independent candidates in five Lok Sabha constituencies and 21 Assembly constituencies situated mainly in the tribal dominated districts of Korajhar, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darrang and Sonitpur. The ABSU has thus displayed some political sensitivity which is going to be of great help to the organisation when once the elections are over.

The saddest part of the entire happenings is the loss of popularity on the part of the Asom Gana Parishad [AGP] which was swept to power in the previous elections. For nearly five years it ruled the State under the leadership of Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta. Today it stands as a hopelessly divided house and its leaders are a tired lot having lost a good deal of their credibility. The AGP under the leadership of Mr. Mahanta and his men continues to be recognised as the original party but its rival the AGP (Reconstituted) has with it some stalwarts of the agitation years like Mr. Phukan. How exactly they are going to keep their arch rival the Congress(I) which is contesting all the seats of the Lok Sabha and the State Assembly at bay is to be seen. As is the case with the national parties which have been taking their own time to finalise their candidates even after the last date for withdrawals was over, the two AGPs are struggling hard to formalise their lists. Altogether, exciting contests are

on the cards and the current election is certainly not going to be a one-sided affair.

*** Papers Report on Situation in Punjab**

*** Power of Fear**

91AS0981A Madras THE HINDU in English 11 May 91 p 7

[Article by K.V. Lakshmana in Chandigarh]

[Text] The chilling emptiness on the roads as the sun begins to go down and the people's reluctance to talk to strangers speaks of the psychological pressure on the people in terrorism-ridden Punjab.

The fear element, real and perceived, is so high in the border districts of the State that it has also cramped the easy-going lifestyle of the people, who try to finish their chores before dark. It is only the very brave or the very foolish who venture out after dark.

Even on the main Grand Trunk Road between Jalandhar and Amritsar traffic begins to thin by 5.30 p.m. and almost vanishes after 6 p.m. The paramilitary CRPF [Central Reserve Police Force] officers and jawans manning the security posts dotting the main roads advise the people to stay at home since they "cannot guarantee safety to all." And in the Road Transport Corporation buses making their last trip in the evening, only a couple of passengers can be seen. And knocks on the doors mostly go unanswered.

No doubt there has been some improvement with the visible presence of the Army, the sealing and more effective patrolling of the borders with Pakistan and the mounting pressure against the militants. Killings, kidnappings and extortions continue unabated. But with top militants getting killed more frequently, the frequency of the "big hits" of the militants has come down considerably.

The sealing of the border, has definitely affected the militants' arms supply line from across the border. For the first time, a militant organisation demanded AK-47 rifles and ammunition as ransom payment for the release of a police officer it had kidnapped—a sure indication of the depleting stockpile of arms with the militants.

Under pressure: Initially when the Army moved in, the militants vacated the border areas and spread out to safer places. But when they realised that the Army was not here for day-to-day operations, save for occasional combing and search actions, they returned to the border districts. Terrorism had spread to hitherto relatively peaceful places like Chandigarh, Ropar, Bhatinda, Sangrur, Patiala and Ludhiana. But now very clearly the militants are under pressure.

A senior police official narrated a story of an old man clubbing to death a militant who tried to rape his niece, to make a point that the people were also getting tired of the militants and their activities. Some people are also coming to police with information, but their number is very insignificant.

Yet, it is not uncommon to come across kidnappings when travelling through the "militant influenced" areas of the State particularly the border districts of Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Ferozepur. The Tarn Taran sub-division of Amritsar, is referred to as the "capital of Khalistan" where social status is determined by the proximity to militants. However, a change for the better is that not a single day passes without the death of a self-styled general or an area commander of one or the other militant outfits.

Now not even posters are required. Just a quiet word is enough for the entire markets on the highways and roads connecting the villages to observe "bandhs" in protest against the killing of a militant leader. And with so many of them getting killed in police encounters these days, the forced bandhs too are increasing in number—sometimes as many as four a week.

A shopkeeper at Ramidhi village, the scene of the first bus passenger killings in the State, is certain that elections would spell more trouble for the Hindus in the State. Yet another shopkeeper requests help in getting assistance from the Delhi administration for settling down in the capital.

Even in the presence of the Army and security forces, posters keep springing up in the name of one or the other militant organisation, listing do's and dont's for the people.

Biggest fear: What the villagers fear most is the intelligence network of the militants. The smiling person standing next to you could either be a sympathiser of the militants or in league with them. So the people do not talk readily, even on condition of anonymity. "You Press people come here once in a while and we have to face the music later," is the common refrain. They dare not displease the militants, for they have to live another day.

It is under these circumstances that the election process has been initiated in the State, polarising sharply the political as well as public opinion on communal lines. While the various Akali Dals and militant backed organisations, representing extremist viewpoints are in favour of elections, political parties such as the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], Congress(I), CPI [Communist Party of India] and CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist] are on the opposite side. This also shows in the election preparations. While the BJP, CPI and CPI(M) have adopted a wait and watch policy, the All India Sikh Students Federation [AISSF], which has the backing of the Panthic Committee (Baba Gurbachan Singh Manochahal plus four militant bodies) has already begun hectic campaigning in the rural areas.

As one goes into the relatively safer urban areas, the Hindus are found to oppose the elections vehemently,

saying that it would amount to "allowing Khalistan." The recent Corporation elections in Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana in which the Congress(I) and BJP put up an unexpectedly good show, have, however, made a dent even in the Hindu opinion. This has strengthened the 'pro-election' lobby.

Fond hope: Four years of President's rule have neither solved the problems nor reduced the impact of terrorism. So what is the point in continuing with it, ask the 'pro-election' lobbyists. "Besides, what is the harm in giving a chance to the boys. Maybe, like in Assam they too will function for some time. Maybe responsibility would change them," fondly hope some people.

In the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections, the main battle will be in the rural areas, which make up 80 out of the total 117 Assembly constituencies and 11 out of the 13 Lok Sabha seats. In these areas fear will be the deciding factor, the claims of the Government about being able to hold free and fair elections notwithstanding. Without one or the other militant organisation's support, it is impossible to even campaign in the rural areas.

'Humbug': Mr. Sat Pal Dang, veteran communist leader, dismisses the justification of Assembly and Lok Sabha elections on the basis of incident-free Corporation elections as "pure humbug." He outlines how the element of fear, even without actual violence, operates on the election day.

Citing examples from the 1989 general elections, he says the militants only have to spread the word and people will vote accordingly. They need not have violence during elections. In fact they do not want violence. Just a few exemplary killings a few days before the polls and the message goes home proper. So how can free and fair elections be held at all, he asks. Even in the Corporation elections, in certain rural wards, voters were very fearful. The counting of votes is booth-wise, and so the voters do not take chances at all.

"Elections are no solution at all. What is required are correct political steps. The militants must be isolated if the problem is to be tackled," says Mr. Dang.

Even though the CPI, CPI(M) and the BJP are opposed to the holding of elections under the prevailing ground realities, they are participating in them so as not to give a walkover to the militant-backed organisations. "Conditions are not favourable for holding elections," says Dr. Baldev Prakash, echoing the sentiments of Mr. Jeevan Singh Umranangal, former Punjab Cabinet Minister in the Badal Government and an independent candidate from Jalandhar Lok Sabha constituency, and several others.

Senior State Congress(I) leader of the State, Mr. R.L. Bhatia, justifying his party's decision to boycott the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections, says "Everybody is afraid of the AK 47s."

There is no doubt among the people that the elections will not be free and fair. Yet, fed up by the absence of a representative Government, they seem to be ready for a poll even at a gunpoint. Elections, if held, will be relatively free in the urban areas, for it is in the rural areas that the militants' writ runs.

Question mark: But the whole question of elections itself hangs in the balance with the Congress(I) stand that if it came to power at the Centre it would 'rethink' the whole thing. The faction-ridden Akali politics, the growing irrelevance of Simranjit Singh Mann, the emergence of the AISSF (Manjit) as a political force to reckon with, and the conflicting stands of the different militant bodies add to the problems.

The whiff of the elections not only blew the lid off the facade of Akali unity, but also placed the militant organisations on opposite sides. And to queer the pitch further, several relatives of the militants have jumped into the fray, realising the ease with which Mann and his candidates won in the 1989 general elections.

The AISSF (Manjit) too wanted to make use of its "influence." It enjoys the backing of the Panthic Committee of Baba Gurbachan Singh Manochahal, which in turn enjoys the support of four militant bodies. But its stand that participation in elections as a "tactical move to achieve the ultimate goal of an independent Sikh State" does not find many buyers in the Panthic Committee headed by the Dr. Sohan Singh and five militant organisations, which have given a call for a poll boycott.

Political observers do not attach much significance to Mr. Manjit Singh's extreme posture, which according to them is aimed at placating the Sikh masses. The AISSF (Bitto) and AISSF (Mehta-Chawla) groups also do not favour elections, saying that participation in the democratic process under the Indian Constitution dilutes the ultimate goal.

So it will not be very surprising if the battle of the ballet turns into one of the bullet. Even Mr. Manjit Singh, AISSF (Manjit) president had to announce his retirement from Tarn Taran Lok Sabha constituency in favour of Mr. Resham Singh Malmori, who is lodged at Ajmer jail at present. Several more such retirements too are on the cards, considering the conflicting stands of the militant outfits.

Already some candidates have been killed, even before campaigning has picked up momentum, necessitating the countermanding of elections. The Akali Dal (Panthic) candidate Ajmer Singh, Akali Dal (Badal) candidate Malkait Singh and Akali Dal (Badal) candidate Darbara Singh have been shot dead leading to the countermanding of elections to five Assembly constituencies (Dirba and Sangrur, Moga and Baghapurna and Dhanaula).

Pakistan factor: Mr. Harminder Singh Gill, AISSF (Manjit) general secretary is being opposed by Mr. Bohar

Singh, father of a Khalistan Liberation Force militant Nishan Singh Makhu in Zira Assembly constituency. There are examples galore.

And in addition to all this is the Pakistan factor. The general perception is that the neighbouring country would not let the initiation of democratic process in Punjab go smoothly. "It will be some militant supported Government in the State," is the common reading of the people, i.e., if elections are held.

* BJP Position

91AS0981B Madras THE HINDU in English 6 May 91 p 9

[Text] New Delhi, May 5—But for the last-minute change of mind by the central leadership of the Congress(I), the major national parties, barring the Janata Dal, had arrived at an understanding on seat sharing in Punjab for the Lok Sabha, Assembly and Corporation elections.

According to the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] vice-president, Mr. K.R. Malkani, the State units of the Congress(I), BJP, CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist] and CPI [Communist Party of India] had agreed to face the militants' challenge unitedly during elections to the three bodies. It had been agreed that for the 117-seat Assembly, the Congress(I) would contest 40 seats, BJP 37 and CPI(M) and CPI 30 to 35 seats. Similarly, for the 13 Lok Sabha seats, the agreement was that the Congress(I) would fight seven seats and BJP and Left parties three each.

However, the Congress(I) central leadership "wriggled" out of this arrangements at the last minute without even consulting the State unit, Mr. Malkani alleged. According to him, the reason for this was that two prominent Congress(I) leaders, the former Home Minister, Mr. Buta Singh and the former Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr. Balram Jhakar, would have to fight from Punjab since the two belonged to that State and both were apprehensive of losing the elections. "That is why the Congress(I) boycotted the Punjab elections," Mr. Malkani added.

BJP-Cong. front at Corpn [corporation]-level discussed. Despite this arrangement falling through, the BJP and Congress(I) are discussing the possibility of forming a "front" at the Corporation level in Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana where no party got a clear majority in recent polls. As of now, the proposal is to grant the Mayoralty to the largest party and the post of Deputy Mayor to the other. Some prominent independents are also sought to be associated with this move by offering them the positions of Senior and Junior Mayors.

Queried on the point whether this signified a softening of stand towards each other by the BJP and Congress(I), Mr. Malkani said the move arose simply from the desire of the major parties in the State to fight the militants' challenge unitedly. Beyond this no conclusions could be drawn, he said.

The BJP vice-president renewed his call to the Congress(I) not to boycott the Punjab elections since the BJP feels that the absence of the Congress in the Assembly would not be in the interest of the State. "There is no rethinking in the BJP on fighting Punjab elections and we appeal to all nationalist parties to contest them and unitedly face the challenge of the militants."

Asked about the fear of violence, Mr. Malkani said that having announced the elections it was for the Government to ensure law and order in the State.

SJP hits out at Cong.(I): The Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP) has criticised the Congress(I) stand that it would review the decision to hold elections in Punjab in case it was voted to power in the general elections. "It seems that this will be the last chance for elections in Punjab, in case the Congress(I) comes to power at the Centre," the SJP leader and the Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, Mr. Kamal Morarka, told reporters.

Mr. Morarka said the Congress(I)'s stand on Punjab elections had dangerous implications for democracy since it amounted to denial of political rights to the people of that State. "Denial of political rights in Punjab is the first step towards rebellion. Those who talk of postponement of elections there want dismemberment of India. It is not only the extremists who want it, these people are also to blame. After all just for a handful of extremists one cannot deny voting rights to the vast majority of the people in Punjab," he added.

Debunking the position that free and fair elections were not possible in Punjab because of fear of violence, the SJP leader said that those who took this position should also talk of Bihar where caste and gang wars were rampant. "But no, in Bihar they want elections, despite the strong possibility of violence of every kind. It only shows that their stand about elections in Punjab is based on partisan considerations.

According to Mr. Morarka, the SJP was of the view that the next elections will be a referendum on whether the country should be governed through the democratic process or through the paramilitary and armed forces. "The SJP is for holding elections in Punjab so that a democratically elected State Government is able to tackle the situation on its own instead of the Central Government running the affairs of the State through the police and Army. But the Congress(I) is for the second option and will go on amending the Constitution every six months. This cannot be justified in a democracy," he added.

* Militant Organizations

91AS0981C Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 20 Apr 91 p 4

[Article by Monimoy Dasgupta: "Militant Organisations Trying To Formulate Common Strategy"]

[Text] Chandigarh, April 19—Alignments have begun between extremist organisations in Punjab following the decision to hold elections in the strife-torn state. The formation of the "Khalsa Council," an apex body to formulate a common strategy for the militants, is likely to be finalised by the end of next week.

The Panthic Committee (Manochahal), which has the support of the Bhindranwale Tiger Force and the Khalistan Commando force led by Gurbachan Singh Rajasthani, has reached an understanding with the All-India Sikh Students' Federation led by Mr Manjit Singh.

The Dashmesh Regiment of Khalistan and the Khalistan Commando Force (Zaffarwal), which work in unison with the Panthic Committee (Zaffarwal), are understood to have forged an alliance with the Sikh Students' Federation (Mehtachawla), led by Mr. Rajinder Singh Mehta and Mr. Amarjit Singh Chawla.

The Babbar Akali Dal, relatively a new party in Punjab has been assured of the support of Babbar Khalsa militants and the Akhand Kirtani Jatha. Led by Mr. Kartar Singh Narang, this party is extremely keen to participate in the elections.

There is widespread belief that the Babbar Akali Dal was floated at the behest of militants to keep the moderates in the Shiromani Akali Dal from becoming all powerful. Sources say the high command of this party comprises mostly "passive hardliners."

But the Shiromani Akali Dal president, Mr. Simranjit Singh Mann, claims to have no difference with the Babbar Akali Dal, saying they are both "fraternal parties." He says he has been in contact with Mr. Kartar Singh to discuss various issues relating to Sikh affairs.

The Panthic Committee (Sohan Singh) is not likely to go in for any new alignments as it is already aligned with five militant outfits—Khalistan Commando Force led by Paramjit Singh Panjwar, Khalistan Liberation Force led by Gurjant Singh Budhisingwala, Babbar Khalsa International led by Sukhdev Singh, Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan led by Rachhpal Singh Chhandran and the Sikh Students' Federation led by Daljit Singh Bittu. This combination has emerged as the strongest force among all militant outfits.

Though this combination has refused to participate in the elections, saying "ballot boxes should be sent back to the Indian government from the streets of Punjab," it is likely to send its representative to the "Khalsa Council." The idea of such a council was primarily mooted to unite all militant organisations, in all probability for the elections.

Coordination committee: The former jathedar of the Akal Takht, Mr Darshan Singh, has formed a coordination committee, consisting of militants, to negotiate the "Sikh problem" with the Union government.

According to sources, the committee recently met the Prime Minister, Mr Chandra Shekhar, twice for discussions. The first meeting took place in New Delhi on March 28. Significantly, this committee was led by Mr Gurtej Singh, former confidant of Mr Mann. A lot of militants from Punjab are also reported to have met the Prime Minister during the past few weeks.

The sources said the Prime Minister had discussed all the pros and cons of holding elections in Punjab with the coordination committee delegation as well as the militants.

Apart from trying to establish contact with as many militants as possible, the Prime Minister is in regular contact with Mr Mann. He visited the ailing Akali leader in hospital yesterday.

* Security Steps

91AS0981D Madras THE HINDU in English 8 May 91 p 1

[Text] Mehandipur (Amritsar), May 7—Security forces have intensified their operations in the border areas of Punjab to counter any attempt by Pakistan at sabotaging the elections in the State.

The Panthic Committee headed by Dr Sohan Singh (believed to be in a hospital in Multan, Pakistan), which has the backing of five militant outfits, has given a call to the people to boycott the elections. A common belief of the people is that Pakistan, through these organisations and infiltration of trained men, will try to create trouble in Punjab.

"The election is a big test for the Government. It is an index of upholding democracy. So they (Pakistan) don't like it," says a senior official of the Border Security Force [BSF], camping at this border village output.

Mr. A.K. Sarbadhikary, DIG [Deputy Inspector General (of Police)], BSF, Amritsar range, says "this is the best time for them (Pakistan) to create problems as the nation is busy with election preparations."

So it has been decided not to withdraw troops from Punjab, particularly from the border areas. Senior BSF officers are regularly going round the borders overseeing the operations. "We are very, very prepared," Mr. Sarbadhikary told THE HINDU a couple of days ago at the Mehandipur camp.

Sealing of border: Fencing of the border is going at a fast pace, he says. The Khem Karan sector is now completely sealed. About 80 percent of the border will be sealed by the end of this month. Still the riverine areas will be left out.

Mr. Sanjeev Gupta, SSP [Samyukta Socialist Party], Amritsar, while claiming that crossing from across the border considerably reduced, said the 'human' element involved made it almost impossible to ensure totally foolproof arangements.

All along the fence, powerful floodlights have been installed. Armed guards are deployed every 100 yards and they scan the area round-the-clock. With evening curfew in force in the area, anyone moving about is just shot. For, "we do not know whether he is a friend or foe."

Two 15-foot screens of barbed wires, erected parallel with a gap of about five feet, form the fencing. In the narrow column between the fencing are placed modified early alarm systems. Small bells tied at a distance of about 20 feet to the barbed wire will tingle if there is any attempt at disturbing the fence. There are trip flares also. And in between the two barbed wire screens are placed equal coils through which low voltage electricity flows—just enough to stun people. Besides, there are booby traps galore. The only way anyone could infiltrate is by cutting through all this," explains Mr. Sarbadhikary. "Our endeavour is to deny the time required for getting through," he says. Besides, men keep a constant watch from border outposts with binoculars and night vision equipment.

If one manages to cross all the formidable hurdles, then a little distance away is the first defence line—the ditch-cum-bundhs—where the army, along with the BSF, moves in at evenings for an all-night vigil.

Mr. Sarbadhikary says the incidence of border crossings has fallen considerably and smuggling activity slowed down. An indication of this was available from the fact that a militant group, which kidnapped a police official, wanted as ransom AK-47 rifles and ammunition. But, as Mr. Gupta says, there are still some desperadoes who risk their lives bringing in arms.

According to Mr. Sarbadhikary, the involvement of local boys of the border villages is very little. "They are staying so close to us that they feel protected."

* Papers Report Developments in Akali Dal

* Ajali Dal(Panthic, Mann)

91AS0972A Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 25 Apr 91 p 9

[Text] Patiala, 28 April (UNI)—The senior Akali leader, Capt. Amrinder Singh, today broke away from the Akali Dal (Badal) and announced the revival of the Akali Dal (Panthic).

PTI adds: The Akali Dal (Mann) general secretary and parliamentary board member, Capt. Harcharan Singh Rode, today resigned from the party posts.

Capt. Rode alleged that most of the tickets in the coming Lok Sabha and Assembly elections were being given to Mr. Mann's relatives, friends and bodyguards and those who were "struggling" for the cause of Sikh Panth were being ignored.

Five executive members of the Akali Dal (Mann) along with their supporters also resigned today in protest against what they said were the "wrongful" policies of Mr. Mann.

* Akali Dal(Longowal)

91AS0972B Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 29 Apr 91 p 5

[Text] The Akali Dal (Longowal) on Wednesday broke away from the Shiromani Akali Dal led by Mr. Simranjit Singh Mann and announced that it would contest all the 13 Lok Sabha and 117 Assembly seats in the forthcoming elections in the State, reports PTI.

Addressing a Press conference the party's acting president, Mr. Kabul Singh, and general secretary, Captain Kanwaljit Singh, said the decision to reactivate the party had been taken in view of Mr. Mann's "failure" to keep all the factions of Akalis together and the "total confusion" about his political goal. Mr. Mann was also misleading the Sikhs with his changing stands, Mr. Kabul Singh alleged.

The Akali Dal led by the former Chief Minister, Mr. Parkash Singh Badal, had broken away yesterday.

Capt. Kanwaljit Singh, Home Minister in the erstwhile Barnala Ministry, said the party candidates have been instructed to file their nominations immediately. The list of candidates would be finalized at the party's working committee meeting to be held in Chandigarh on 28 April.

He said a committee headed by the former Minister, Mr. Natha Singh Dalam, had been constituted to draft the party manifesto, which would be released soon.

However, he said, the political aim of the party is to achieve a federal structure in which the aspirations of the Sikhs could be fulfilled and their identity and self-respect restored. Beside, if the party was voted to power it would enforce the rule of law and end the "excesses" and bloodshed in the State.

The main aim of the party would be to defeat the Congress(I) and BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] and to achieve this it could have seat adjustment with any like-minded party or Sikh organization, he said.

Capt. Kanwaljit Singh said their party was already registered and it was allotted the symbol of "scales."

He said with the sole aim of forging unity among the Akalis, the Akali Dal(L), like the Akali Dal(Badal), had agreed to accept Mr. Simranjit Singh Mann as its leader on 12 January. But Mr. Mann, instead of consolidating this unity, himself promoted factionalism and belied the hopes of the Sikh Panth.

Capt. Singh said Mr. Mann gave no representation to the Akali Dal(L) and Akali Dal(Badal) in the working committee and also in the parliamentary board. Beside, he did nothing to solve the Punjab problem or check the excesses being committed against the Sikhs.

He said Mr. Mann's statements calling on Sikhs in the country to migrate to Pakistan and join the U.S. forces to fight Iraq were never approved in the party forum. The statements made the Sikhs a laughing stock both inside and outside the country, he added.

Both Mr. Kabul Singh and Capt. Kanwaljit Singh appealed to the people of Punjab to help form a Government which could bring peace, heal the wounds of the Sikhs and give a new direction to the State for its overall development.